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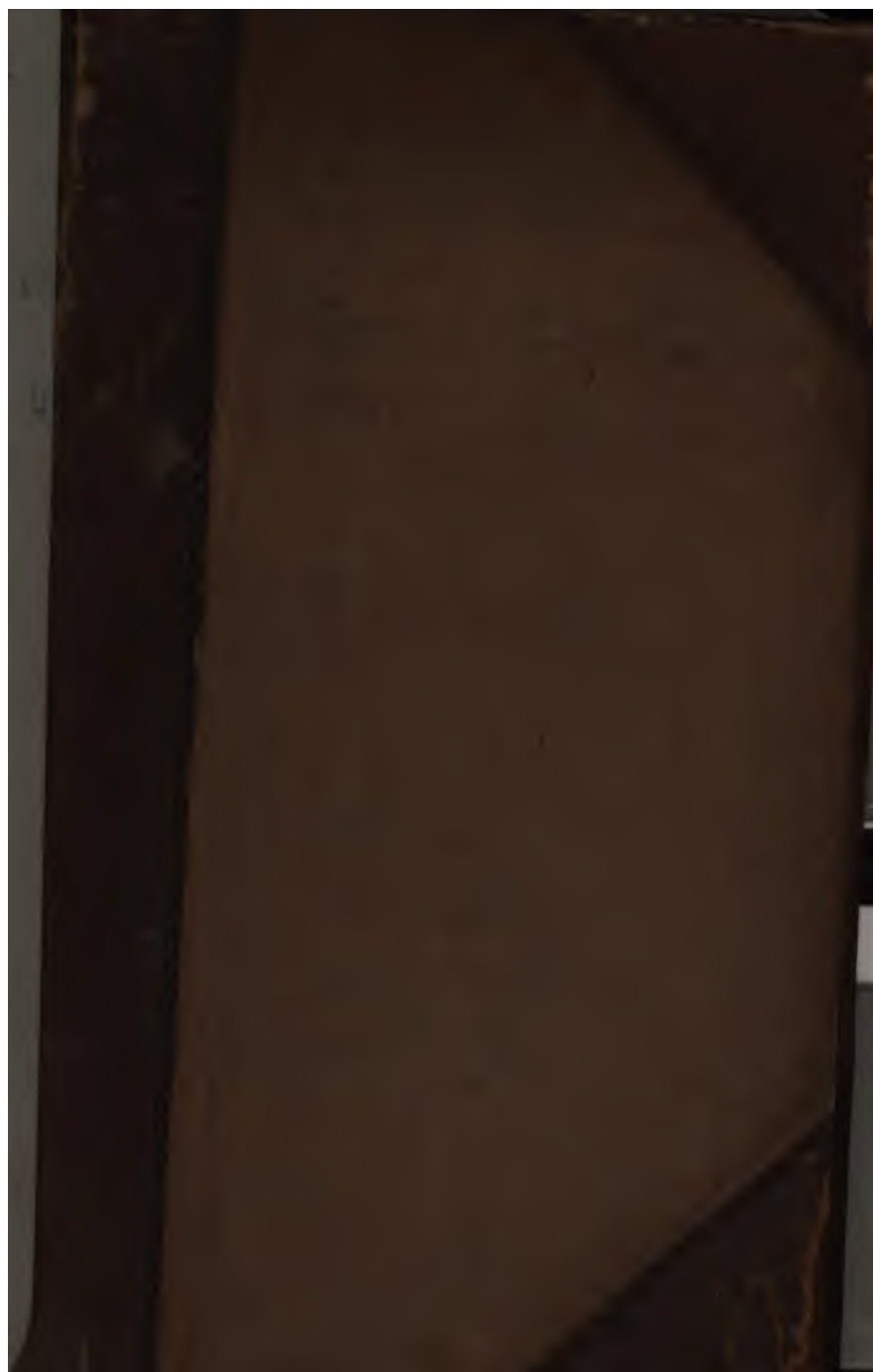
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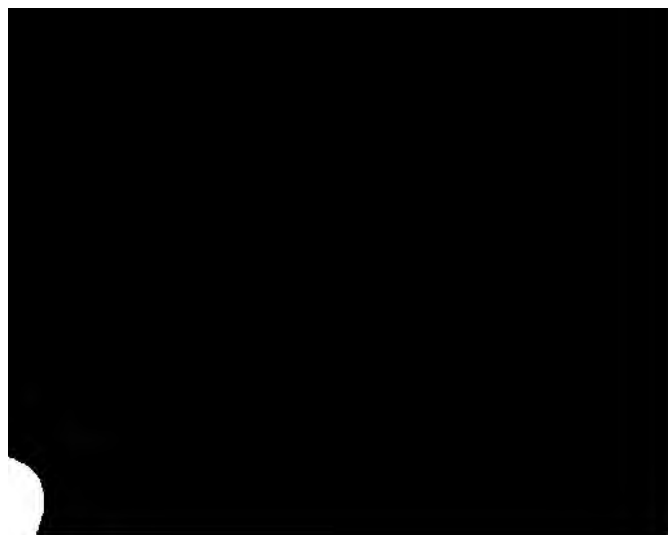
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ST. PAUL'S

SECOND EPISTLE TO

THE CORINTHIANS,

AND

THE GALATIANS,

EXPLAINED

IN SIMPLE AND FAMILIAR LANGUAGE.

By G. B.

LONDON:

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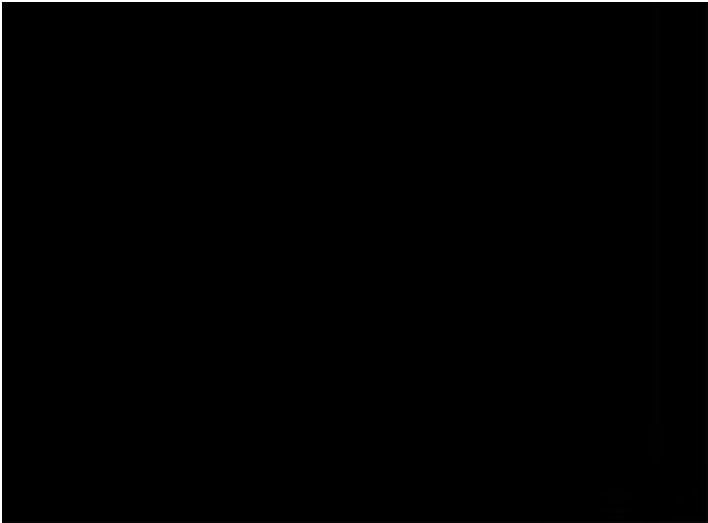
A PRAYER

BEFORE READING THE SCRIPTURES.

O GOD who hast mercifully given unto us the Holy Scriptures to be a lamp unto our feet, and a light unto our paths, make me truly sensible of the value of this precious Book. Grant me a sincere desire both to understand it, and to walk according to it. Give me grace to study it with a meek, and lowly, and teachable mind. Grant me the assistance of the Holy Spirit, that I may rightly understand what Thou hast therein revealed, for by the light of the Spirit alone can spiritual things be discerned.* Help me by the rule of the Bible to judge myself that I may not be judged, and condemned by Thee. Show me my true condition, what I am, what I need, and what Thou hast provided for me. Oh teach me to know

* See 1 Cor. ii. 14.

myself to be a sinner, convince me thoroughly of my ruined state by nature, and cause me to feel my great need of a Saviour. Oh make me much in earnest when I inquire what I must do to be saved. Lord, grant that I may feel it to be my pleasure, as well as my duty, to study the Bible, and that I may find it full of comfort as well as instruction. Enable me to believe both its threatenings and its promises. If Thou art pleased to awaken my mind to fear Thy wrath, Oh make me joyful also to believe Thy love as Thou hast made it known in the Gospel of Thy Son Jesus Christ. Strengthen my faith in the efficacy of His death. Permit me now to feel the benefit of it by receiving power to overcome sin. Enable me to realize more and more



SECOND EPISTLE TO
THE CORINTHIANS.



THE SECOND

EPISTLE TO THE CORINTHIANS.

CHAPTER I.

EXPLANATION.

VERSE 1 to 7. ST. PAUL is supposed to have written his second letter to the Corinthians from Philippi, a few months after the first. He begins very much in the same manner as before; showing from whom the letter comes, and for whom it is meant. It comes, he says, from me (1) Paul, an Apostle of Jesus Christ, one who has been called to that office by the sovereign will of God, and from Timothy, a beloved brother in Christ. It is addressed to the church of God at Corinth, and to all the saints in the surrounding province of Achaia: (2) to whom he wishes grace and peace from God the Father, and from our Lord Jesus Christ. (3) Blessed be God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who is the Author of all our mercies and comforts; (4) for He comforts us in all our distresses, so that we are enabled to comfort others who are in any trouble, by telling them of that comfort which we ourselves have received from God. (5) For I can tru^{ly}

that in proportion as our sufferings for the name of Christ have been great, so have our consolations from Christ been great also. (6) And when we are afflicted, we feel that it is for your good, inasmuch as you are effectually taught by us how you may profitably bear the same sort of sufferings as ourselves. And when we are comforted, we also feel that that will be for your good, as you will certainly receive consolation in hearing of our comfort. We feel all this, (7) because our hope concerning you is strong. We do believe that as you have shared in our sufferings, so you will also in our consolations.

APPLICATION.

Afflictions may be the means of salvation, and of consolation.

The afflictions which abound in the world are often a great stumbling block to those whose faith is weak, and who accustom themselves to look more at the things which are seen and temporal, than at those things which are not seen, but eternal.

We often hear people wondering how He, who is called "the Father of mercies," can permit His children to suffer so heavily, particularly when it is observed, that those who serve Him best are often the most afflicted. This arises from not considering the grand object which God has in view in all His dealings with us, namely, to make us holy. He chastens us "for our profit, that we might be

partakers of His holiness : . . . without which no man shall see the Lord." (Heb. xii. 10—14.) The fact is, that while the world smiles upon us, and we prosper in it, we are apt to love it too well. Now, since it is written, "If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him," (1 John ii. 15) we must surely feel that He exercises His tenderest kindness, when He sends the rod of affliction to drive us off from our attachment to those things, which would certainly in the end prove our ruin. Affliction being thus the instrument of preserving us from ruin, it may well be called our salvation; and if received aright, it does in truth prove the means of our consolation also. This St. Paul maintains from his own experience. And he encourages all, who will take pattern by him, to expect the same. He also points out one particular source of consolation. He shows how affliction procures for us an actual gratification, by enabling us to comfort others in a way in which we could not comfort them, if we had not been ourselves afflicted. A true disciple of Christ desires, as far as possible, to tread in the steps of Him who went about doing good. And as it was His blessed office to bind up the broken hearted, and to comfort all who mourn, so to His followers will no work be found more delightful than this.

There can hardly be a greater gratification to a rightly disposed mind, than to be permitted to sooth a troubled spirit, to pour the oil of joy into a mourner's heart, and to cause the spirit of heaviness to be exchanged for the garment of praise. (See Isa. lxi. 3.). Now this is the sweet office which the Father of mercies has reserved for His most

afflicted servants; for it seldom happens that those who have not themselves drank deep of the cup of sorrow, can sweeten it to others. For if we hope to comfort those who are in any trouble, it must be "by the comfort wherewith we ourselves are comforted of God." A personal experience of suffering on the one hand, and of the consolations which abound by Christ on the other, are required to fit any one for the blessed office of binding up a broken heart, and for becoming the mourner's friend.

EXPLANATION.

Verse 8 to 11. In order to comfort the Corinthians under their afflictions, St. Paul goes on to describe what had happened to himself and his companions. He says, (8) I would wish you to know, brethren, that while we were in Asia, trouble pressed so heavily upon us, that it seemed more than we could bear, so that we quite despaired of life.* (9) The consequence of which was, that seeing no way of escape, and having death thus before our eyes, we were taught not to trust in ourselves, but were led to place our confidence in that God who can even raise the dead; (10) and who did deliver us out of this great peril of death, and does still preserve us; in whom also we trust for further deliverances. (11) And you we hope will help us by praying for us; that so our preservation being bestowed on us

* This probably refers to what passed at Ephesus, recorded in the nineteenth chapter of Acts.

through the prayers of many persons, many also may be led to give thanks on our account.

APPLICATION.

Afflictions intended for good, but not always improved by us to that end.

Here we see how affliction works for good, by exercising our faith. It was when all human help failed, that the Apostles were driven to place their dependance entirely upon God. Real happiness is only to be found in Him. Nevertheless it is not from God, that man, if left to himself, would ever seek it. We must be taught this invaluable lesson in the school of affliction.

In great mercy our heavenly Father shows us by degrees the unsatisfying nature of all earthly pleasure, the insufficiency of all human support. And He does so that we may be led to look for the supply of all our need in Himself. He makes us feel the bitterness of loving and trusting in human creatures more than Himself, in order to teach us that the first and best place in our affections ought to be given to Him.

By painful experience we must learn, that to depend on an arm of flesh is trusting to a bruised reed, on which, if a man leans, it will go into his hand, and pierce it. The friends we have too dearly loved must be taken away, or ill health must deprive us of the power to find pleasure in the world,

before we shall give much attention to the invitation of our blessed Saviour, "Come unto me, and I will give you rest." A sentence of death is passed upon all earthly enjoyment, in order that we should not trust in any thing, but in that God who can even raise the dead. With Him all things are possible; and experience will show to all who do trust in Him, that He can, and does, and will deliver us out of every trouble.

If we are pressed out of measure, above strength, in so much that we despair of any creature help, this is the very time to exercise faith; to believe that God will make known His power and love in our behalf. And the end will prove how true it is, that "whoso putteth his trust in the Lord shall be safe." (Prov. xxix. 25.) And thus will many be led to give thanks to Him on our account. But let us observe, that though this is the benefit which God designs in afflicting us, yet it does not always follow that afflictions are so blest. Some people seem to think, that the mere fact of their having trouble in this world is to secure them from being in torment for ever in the next. But this is a most dreadful mistake. It may be quite the reverse. Their present sufferings, however great they may think them, are perhaps but the beginning of sorrows, not worthy to be named in comparison with the far greater sufferings which are to follow. The question then is, Have we profited by our afflictions? Have we been driven to God by our sorrows? Have they convinced our hearts of sin, and opened our eyes to see the folly and madness of neglecting God? Have we deeply mourned our past ingratitude?

And are we now made to feel that in His favour only is life? Can we truly say, "It is good for me that I have been afflicted?" "Before I was afflicted I went astray; but now have I kept Thy word?" (Psalm cxix. 67.) Can we heartily thank God that His chastening hand has been upon us?

It is sad indeed to suffer in vain; therefore, Reader, if you are afflicted, lift up your heart "to the Lord thy God which teacheth thee to profit, which leadeth thee by the way that thou shouldest go," (Isa. xlviii. 17) and pray, not that your sorrows may be removed, but that they may be sanctified to the good of your soul.

EXPLANATION.

Verse 12 to 14. In the midst of all our sorrows we have, says St. Paul, one great cause of rejoicing: our consciences bear us witness, that our conversation in general, and particularly among you, has been guided not by the wisdom of man, but by the grace of God, in simplicity and godly sincerity. (13) And in saying this, I say no more than you have acknowledged to be true, and I trust that you will never have any cause to think otherwise of us. (14) Some of you indeed have acknowledged us to be the chief cause of your joy and rejoicing. Even as you are ours, and will be also in the day of the Lord Jesus.

APPLICATION.

Let the afflicted beware of adding sin to sorrow.

We learn from hence, that the greatest comfort we can have in times of affliction is an approving conscience. St. Paul found this to be the subject of great joy and rejoicing to him; for whatever the spite of his enemies could do against him, they could not deprive him of this. They might take away his goods, his liberty, or his life; but they could not rob him of what he prized still more, his innocency.

Nothing is to be dreaded so much even in this world as the stings of a wounded conscience. And yet it is no uncommon thing to find people in great distress seeking to ease themselves of their burden by unlawful means. They think their sorrow is so great it is not to be endured; and in the vain hope of some relief they madly listen to the suggestions of Satan, and make their case infinitely worse by adding sin to sorrow.

It ought never to be forgotten, that as God's object in allowing us to be afflicted is always merciful, so the devil's object, when he is permitted to try us, is always cruel. God would thereby draw us to Himself, in whose favour only is life. The devil would drive us to despair, that we may share with him in everlasting death. What need, therefore, have we to beware of the effect our afflictions have upon us.

That sorrow which is not our gain will work our ruin.

Poverty, or sickness, or the loss of friends, if borne with patient submission to God's will, and a confiding trust in His power and love, would give us this cause of rejoicing; even the testimony of our conscience to the reality and sincerity of our religious profession. But if through poverty we be tempted to steal, or if in our distress we rebel against God, or seek to drown care by drinking, what do we but fall into the snares of the devil? We add sin to sorrow here, and make ready our bed in hell hereafter.

EXPLANATION.

Verse 15 to 24. St. Paul had the satisfaction of a good conscience, and was sure of being well received, at least by some among the Corinthians; therefore he says, (15) Feeling this confidence I certainly did intend to have come and given you the benefit of a second visit in my way into Macedonia, and from thence to have returned again to you, in order to be accompanied by some of you on my way into Judea. (17) Now, though I did intend this, and have not done it, it is not right that you should therefore suppose that I form my plans without consideration; or that what I purpose to do is done merely on worldly principles, just according to my own fancy, and that I say first yes, and then no, without any reason. And lest you should be inclined to think in consequence, that my preaching also is unstable, I must declare, that (18) as God is true,

the words we have spoken to you have not been of an uncertain nature; we have never said and unsaid anything. (19) No. The doctrine which was preached among you by me and my companions, Silvanus and Timotheus, concerning the Son of God, our Saviour Jesus Christ, was not first one thing and then another, but all things concerning Him are sure and settled. (20) For whatever God has promised is secured to us, and made certain through Him, the fulfilment of which will be to His own glory by us, who are made the instruments of leading you to Christ. (21) But be it well observed: He who establishes both us and you in the knowledge of Christ is God; who also hath anointed us, that is to say, has called us to our office; (22) and who has sealed us, or stamped us as His own, in token whereof He has given us the earnest of the Spirit in our hearts; that is to say, we have a foretaste given us of those spiritual joys which will be perfected in heaven. (23) But with respect to my change of plans, I take God to witness upon my soul, that my reason for not coming to Corinth just yet was in order to spare you that distress and shame which you would have felt at seeing me, while things were going on so indifferently among you. (24) Not that we pretend to have any dominion over your faith, but we desire to promote your real happiness; for it is by a right faith only you can stand.

APPLICATION.

That we should be slow in judging one another. And that we ought not to judge of religion by the conduct of its professors.

We ought to be very slow in passing judgment upon others. We are far too ready in giving our opinion upon the conduct of our neighbours. It seldom happens that we are fully acquainted with all the circumstances of the case, and probably know nothing of the motive of their actions. The conduct of St. Paul certainly seemed irresolute and changeable; but he begs the Corinthians to withhold their judgment. It was true, he had altered his plans; but then he had sufficient reasons for doing so. The news of their misconduct, which in the mean time had reached his ears, was the cause of his delaying his intended visit to them. It was tenderness to their feelings which had guided his conduct. He wished to spare them the shame of receiving reproof from him personally; and therefore he had chosen to write instead of going to them. But while he was thus studying their comfort, they accuse him of fickleness. Whenever then we are on the point of expressing our disapprobation of the conduct of another, let us stop ourselves, and consider, that perhaps in our censure we may be as unjust as the Corinthians were towards the kind and considerate Apostle.

Another lesson which we may learn from this passage of Scripture is this: not

gion for the faults of its professors. Supposing St. Paul had been a changeable person, it would not have proved that the religion he taught was uncertain and changeable. We find people sometimes refusing to attend church, because their Minister is of an unworthy character; as if the truth of God depended upon the sincerity of him, who tells us of His love. The inconsistencies of others will not be laid to our charge, neither will our disgust at their misconduct be an excuse for ours, if we are led to think slightly of religion, and to undervalue those sacred ordinances by which we ourselves might profit, though he who administers them does not. Or supposing it should happen, that one who has been our guide and counsellor in spiritual things, and to whom we have looked with the greatest confidence, should prove to be a hypocrite and a deceiver, we are not on that account to think that religion itself is a deception. However frail and fickle man may be, Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, to-day and for ever; and all the promises made to us by God through Him are yea and amen. They are firmly fixed and sure: and whatever else may fail, they will not. When such disappointments do occur, we are taught this truth, that man is nothing, and God everything in the work of our salvation. He who alone can establish us in Christ is God. Generally speaking it is true, that by means of His Ministers God gets Himself glory in the salvation of men. But if the glory be not given, if praise be not rendered where it is due, we must expect some bitter chastening to call us to a remembrance of our sin. We must be taught to know and feel, that the saving of our souls

is God's work from beginning to end. He it is who anoints us with a holy calling. He it is who seals us, or marks us for His own. And finally, He it is who gives us those sweet foretastes of happiness, those inward spiritual joys which are the earnest, or first fruits of Heaven ; like the grapes of Eshcol, they are the fruits of Canaan eaten in the wilderness. (See Numbers xiii. 24.) If then we are partakers of such blessings as these, to God alone be all the praise. Our language ought to be " What shall I render unto the Lord for all His benefits towards me?" (Psalm cxvi. 12.)

PRAYER.

O blessed God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, Thou Father of mercies, and God of all comfort, mercifully comfort me in all my tribulations, that I may be enabled to comfort others also. Lord, grant, that if suffering should abound, consolation may also abound to me through Jesus Christ. When trouble presseth sore, even above the measure of my own strength to endure, then may I learn to trust not in myself, but in Thee, who canst even raise the dead. To Thee may I ever look, who will deliver me out of all my distresses. Grant me, O Lord, at all times, the rejoicing of a clear conscience. In simplicity and godly sincerity teach me to cast all my care on Thee. Suffer me not to be tempted through fleshly wisdom, to seek relief by any unlawful means ; but by Thy grace enable me to maintain an upright conversation in the world, that I may have cause of rejoicing in the day of the Lord Jesus. Make me slow to judge the con-

duct of others, and ready always in the spirit of charity to hope the best concerning all men. Lord increase my faith in all Thy precious promises made unto us through Jesus Christ. Enable me to see that they are all yea and amen in Him. Teach me with my whole heart to give glory to Thee, who only canst establish us in Christ. Grant that I may be numbered with those whom Thou hast anointed and sealed. And, Oh, be graciously pleased to give me more and more abundantly the earnest of the Spirit in my heart. Grant that I may find some among Thy people willing to be helpers of my joy, and who may by Thy blessing on their labours establish me in the true faith. Mercifully grant these prayers for Jesus Christ's sake. Amen.

CHAPTER II.

EXPLANATION.

VERSE 1 to 11. In this chapter the subject of the last is continued. St. Paul is explaining why he had not visited Corinth, and he gives the following reason : (1) I had determined this with myself, that when I did come to you again, it should not be with a heavy heart. (2) For if on my coming I were obliged to make you sorry by my reproof, to whom could I look for comfort? for those who else would have made me glad would be the very persons I had been obliged

to grieve. (3) It is for this reason, therefore, that I have written to you instead of coming to you, in order that when I do come, I may not have sorrow from those who ought to be the cause of my rejoicing. And I do confidently think this of you, that in my joy you would all readily partake; you would find your happiness in being able to make me happy. (4) It was indeed in much affliction and anguish of heart, and with many tears, that I wrote to you my last letter; not, as you may well believe, with the intention to grieve you, but that you might know the abundant love I have towards you by my anxiety for your welfare. (5) I know very well that he* who caused me so much grief did not grieve me alone, but that you also were much distressed. I say this, because I do not wish to seem to bear hard upon you. (6) I consider now that the offender has sufficiently suffered by the punishment which was inflicted upon him by the church. (7) So that instead of urging you to any farther severity, I now recommend that he should be forgiven and comforted, lest over much sorrow should lead him to despondency. (8) Therefore, I beseech you to make him assured of your love towards him. (9) For my object in writing to you was to see whether you were willing to be obedient to me in all things. (10) But on any occasion, when you are satisfied that an offender is penitent, and feel willing to forgive him, I am also willing that he should be forgiven. I, who am acting in the name and on the authority of Christ,

* St. Paul here alludes to the person spoken of in his former Letter, Chapter v.

say this, not so much for the sake of the offender, as for your sakes generally, and out of regard to the interests of the church. (11) Lest by too great severity Satan should lead any one to despair; for we are not ignorant that this is one of his devices.

APPLICATION.

On the manner of giving and receiving reproof.

St. Paul felt that by reproving the Corinthians for what was amiss among them, he gave the best proof he could of his abundant love towards them; he knew at least that it had cost him many tears to write what he had done. But some of those who read his letter were probably little inclined to give him credit for such tender feelings, and were perhaps more ready to be angry with him, and to consider his conduct as an unnecessary interference with their affairs. At any rate certain it is, that nothing is more common among ourselves than to find reproof ill taken.

That correction or counsel which is given from motives of the fondest affection, or most sincere regard, is too often looked upon as an unkindness, or received as an affront. Oh the pride and wretched self-deception of man's heart! While in our natural state each one is in love with self; and love so completely blinds, that in our ignorant self-satisfaction we cannot imagine that anything but unkindness could charge us with those faults we cannot see. And even after the Spirit of God has convinced us

of sin, and in a measure removed those bandages by which Satan binds our eyes, it is still often with great difficulty that we take thankfully the reproofs of a friend, or the corrections of a superior. The old leaven of pride generally rises up in self-defence, or finds relief in inward complainings.

Reader, have you not experienced this in your own case? Does not conscience bear witness to the truth of it? Is not self-excuse generally the first impulse of the mind on being reproofed, and is not something of dislike, the feeling which remains towards the reprover? You will scarcely deny that this is so. But oh what ingratitude! and what a melancholy proof of the root of sin remaining in us!

To a right-minded person few things are more painful to give, or more profitable to receive, than correction. But those in authority ought to feel themselves bound by duty firmly, yet with all tenderness, to deal reproof, as occasion requires. Those on the other hand who receive it are bound to believe that it is offered in love, and for their good; and is more deserved than perhaps to themselves it may appear to be.

Children and servants, who often think themselves most hardly used by being found fault with, little know the pain and distress it often gives their masters or parents to be obliged to make those sorry, by whom they would wish to be made glad. Sometimes it is even with real affliction, much anguish of heart, and many tears, that this ill-requested, but real proof of love is given; but when the reproof which is well meant is properly received, then it is followed by a mutual joy on both sides.

Care however should be taken by those in power not to exercise authority with undue severity, since we are not ignorant that Satan knows how to turn despondency to his own advantage. A wise and kind master, parent, or ruler, will inflict such punishment only, as is calculated to benefit the offender, and not to overwhelm him with over-much sorrow; and he will take all possible care to show that he is governed solely by the spirit of love.

EXPLANATION.

Verse 12 to 17. St. Paul wishing to prove to the Corinthians his great love to them, says, (12) Furthermore, I was so anxious about you, and so anxious to know how you had taken my correction, that when I came to the city of Troas, though there was a good opportunity for me to preach Christ's Gospel, (13) yet I could not remain, my mind being so restless until I could see Titus, my brother Minister, from whom I expected to receive tidings of you; so I left Troas, and went into Macedonia in search of him. (14) And thanks be to God, wherever we go, He always makes us to triumph through Christ; for in every place He is pleased to show forth the sweetness and blessedness of the knowledge of Christ by means of our preaching. (15) And since we are thus employed to spread abroad the glorious Gospel of Jesus Christ, we are always as a sweet smell acceptable unto God, whether men will receive the Gospel and be saved, or whether they will reject it and perish. (16) To the latter, since they

perceive not the sweetness of the Gospel, our preaching is as the smell of death, and eternal death will follow; but by those who believe the Gospel, we are received as bringing the sweet smell of life, and life eternal will certainly be their portion.

Such being the awful consequences which attend the preaching of the Gospel, we may well ask who is equal to the task of being a Minister? We deeply feel the responsibility of our office, but we have this comfort, (17) we are not like many who corrupt the word of God; that is to say, who for their own ends misrepresent the truth. No. It is truly in sincerity, and by the command of God, and under a sense of His presence, that we speak in the name of Christ, and deliver to you His message.

APPLICATION.

Our feelings to be regulated, not destroyed. The savour of Christ's Gospel manifested by a holy life.

Most commonly we find people far too much inclined to be governed in all things by their feelings.

Inclination, and not duty, is too often the rule by which their actions are guided. Nevertheless, there are some well-meaning, but misguided persons, whose aim seems to be to destroy, and not merely to regulate properly, their natural feelings and affections. The object of their desire no doubt is perfection; but then it is a perfection of their own imagining, and not according to the standard of Scripture. From

the conduct of St. Paul on the present occasion, we may learn, that religion does not altogether forbid us to indulge the natural feelings of anxiety and concern which circumstances may excite in our minds respecting absent friends; it does not require of us such an universal love for all mankind, as to prevent our having particular regard for some above others. The Corinthians were to St. Paul objects of peculiar interest; and though there were many precious souls at Troas, for whose good he would have wished to labour, yet his anxiety being so great for his old friends, he allowed himself to be so far guided by the feelings of nature, as to go to them in preference to remaining at Troas.

But though religion does not require us to love all men alike, or to be insensible to the feelings, or unmindful of the claims of friendship, it does require that all our feelings, and all our friendships, should be under subjection to the one great ruling principle of love to Christ. This principle we see guided St. Paul throughout. Wherever he went, his object was to preach the Gospel; and it was the subject of his triumphant joy, that in every place he came to, the savour of the knowledge of Christ was made manifest by him. If, then, we profess to be followers of the Lord Jesus, the same principle must direct and guide us. But instead of neglecting our relatives, or wounding unnecessarily the feelings of friends by a misguided zeal for religion, let us endeavour by a most careful performance of every relative duty to manifest in our behaviour the sweet savour of the knowledge of Christ, that we may the more effectually influence others; for example will preach more powerfully than words.

It is true that, to those only who are the ordained Ministers of Christ, belongs the awful responsibility of preaching that Gospel, which has either a savour of death unto death, or a savour of life unto life; but all are bound to labour to the utmost of their power, and according to the degree of their influence, to make known the Lord Jesus, and to extend His kingdom. This among private Christians will certainly best be done by showing forth the beauty and excellency of religion in their conduct. Diligently to perform all the duties which we owe to one another out of love to God, this is to make a sweet savour of religion manifest in the best possible manner.

But we must not expect, that it will carry conviction to every mind. There are some who will not be persuaded to acknowledge the sweet savour of religion by any means. The preaching of the Gospel, however powerful, whether by argument or by example, has still to them the savour of death. Their opposition to Christ and his Gospel is not to be overcome by any means, and it will but add to their condemnation, that a witness for the truth has been placed before them. Nevertheless we must remember for our consolation, that whenever Christ is truly preached, it is a sweet savour to God, whether men are saved, or whether they perish. God is glorified, when by our life and doctrine He enables us to make manifest the blessed Gospel of His Son.

PRAYER.

O Lord God, I acknowledge and confess that in many things I *offend continually*. I leave undone

what I ought to do, and do things which I ought not. Make me, therefore, willing and thankful to be re-proved for my faults. Deliver me from the blinding influence of pride and self-love. Teach me to count those among my best friends, who show me my sins, and correct me for my good. Make me ready also to show my love to others by assisting them with my advice, or by giving reproof when required. Suffer me not to shrink back from this important duty through fear or love of ease. Give me both courage and wisdom for the work. Enable me, O Lord, to keep my feelings under due control. Grant that wherever I go, or whatever I do, the desire to honour Thee may be uppermost in my mind. Assist me by my life and conduct to make known to others the beauty and excellency of true religion.

I beseech Thee, O Lord, to support, direct, and bless, the Ministers of the Gospel. Grant that by their means the knowledge of Christ may be made known in every place, and that it may be a savour of life unto many souls.

Turn the hearts, and enlighten the understandings, of those Ministers who, either ignorantly or willingly, corrupt Thy Holy Word. Teach them with all sincerity, and as in Thy sight, to speak the truth as faithful servants of Jesus Christ; for whose sake, O Lord, mercifully accept these imperfect prayers. To whom, with Thee, and the Holy Ghost, be all honour and glory.

CHAPTER III.

EXPLANATION.

Verse 1 to 5. At the close of the last chapter, St. Paul spoke of the sincerity with which he preached, and he imagined that his enemies might perhaps say, as they had said before, that he was a boaster; with a wish to prevent this, he alludes to the subject himself: (1) Do you think now, that we are endeavouring to recommend ourselves? or, that like some of your new teachers, we feel any need of letters of recommendation, either to you or from you? (2) No. We consider that you yourselves having been consecrated to Christianity by our means, are the best letters of recommendation we could have; letters such as are deeply engraven on our hearts, and which may be read and understood by all the world. (3) For it is plain to be seen, that you are letters written by Christ Himself, we being His Ministers in the work; written, not with ink, but by the Holy Spirit. You have the law of God, written not as God once did write it, upon tables of stone, but on the fleshy tables of your hearts; that is to say, the work of the Spirit may be read in the change which has taken place in your hearts and lives. (4) Such then is the nature of that confidence which we have towards God through Jesus Christ. (5) Do not therefore suppose, that of ourselves we feel able so much as to think a good thought. All the ability we have for our *work comes from God.*

APPLICATION.

The real Christian, a marked character.

We should do well here to stop, and ask ourselves this question, Am I “manifestly declared to be the epistle of Christ?” that is to say, do those who read my character, and know my manner of life, see plainly, that the Gospel of Jesus Christ has been truly received by me, that it has produced a change in my conduct?

For it certainly appears by what St. Paul says, that a real Christian is one who may be known and read of all men. The change from sin to holiness, from the power of Satan unto God, is too great to pass unobserved.

The Spirit’s work upon the heart of a renewed man, though not perfected here, is still sufficiently marked to be understood. The man on whose heart the Holy Ghost has written a new and holy law may not perhaps be admired for it, but still the change cannot fail to be observed. We know that our blessed Lord Himself was not admired by the world. He was despised and rejected of men. Perfectly pure and holy as He was, they saw no beauty in Him, and those who are His followers must expect no better treatment. They will generally find themselves ridiculed and laughed at by the ungodly. But that very thing proves that their religion is decided, that it is clearly seen and acknowledged in their conduct, that they are

in fact “manifestly declared to be the epistle of Christ.”

But, alas, people are for the most part contented to be neither one thing nor another. They hope that they are not altogether to be classed with the world, which is at enmity with God; but yet they cannot flatter themselves that they are decidedly epistles of Christ, such as no one can mistake.

Reader, if you are one of these half-and-half sort of Christians, read the fifteenth and sixteenth verses of the third chapter of Revelation, and they will make you tremble. You may fancy you hear your own sentence pronounced by the Judge at the last day: “I know thy works, that thou art neither cold nor hot. I would thou wert cold or hot. So then, because thou art lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will spue thee out of my mouth.”

But if you have hitherto been lukewarm in your religion, trying to serve God and loving the world at the same time, still it is not now too late to change, and become henceforth a decided character. If hitherto your love to God has been cold, it may now become warm. If you discover that there is danger in not being thoroughly religious, you have time to profit by the discovery. Your final sentence is not yet passed, though you see what it would be, if you were to die in your present state. Though God would then cast you from Him, He will not do so now, if you approach Him in earnest prayer. The Scriptures represent God as now sitting, not on a throne of judgment, but on a mercy seat, and His language is, “Him that cometh to me, I will in no wise cast out.” (John vi. 37.)

Oh, that all men would improve their opportunity while they have it, and seek to become so decidedly and eminently religious, that no one should mistake what master they serve. By one method only can this be effected. As God once wrote the ten commandments on tables of stone, so by the power of the Holy Ghost must His holy law be written on our hearts before we become truly and savingly religious. Without this nothing can avail. Nothing which can be written with a pen, nothing which the Ministers of Christ can preach will change the heart of man, unless it be accompanied by the Spirit of the living God. For this, therefore, we must earnestly pray, being encouraged so to do by the promise that our Heavenly Father will give His Holy Spirit to them that ask Him. (See Luke xi. 13.)

EXPLANATION.

Verse 6 to 11. St. Paul having spoken of the law which was written by God on tables of stone, now goes on to compare the Old Testament with the New, and to show how much the Gospel of Jesus Christ is superior to the law of Moses. Speaking of himself and his fellow-labourers, he says, (6) God has fitted us to be Ministers of the New Testament: that is to say, He has qualified us to explain the new covenant, or agreement, which God has made with His people, according to which, the law is not enforced to the letter, though we are required to live agreeably to the spirit of it. For the law, if enforced to the very letter, as it must be when taken as the rule by which we are to be

judged, would condemn us to eternal death; but by the Spirit which is now given, we are enabled to serve God with newness of life. (7) Now, if the giving out of the law which was written upon stones, and which carried death along with it, was so glorious that the Israelites could not look stedfastly on the face of Moses because of its brightness, which brightness was to pass away, (8) how much more glorious must the preaching of the Gospel be, which is accompanied by the works of the life-giving and Eternal Spirit? (9) For if the giving of that law, which brought death, was attended with so much glory, how much more must the Gospel, which promises justification to all who faithfully receive it, exceed in glory? (10) For though the giving of the law by Moses was glorious, yet in comparing it with the glory of the Gospel, which is so much greater, its glory sinks to nothing. (11) For if the old dispensation of the law, which was to be done away, was glorious, how much more glorious must the new dispensation of the Gospel be, which is to remain for ever?

APPLICATION.

The Law and the Gospel explained and compared.

We all think Moses a highly favoured man; and so he was. He was the great lawgiver. He received from God, and gave to the people, the tables of stone, on which were written the ten commandments. The bright light which shone on his face after he had been

with God in the mount, (Exod. xxxiv. 29) was a mark of high honour; nevertheless, be it observed, the law by its strict requirements could not but condemn every human creature. Therefore the honour put upon Moses, as the deliverer of such a law, was nothing in comparison with that which every Minister of the New Testament now enjoys. St. Paul did not wish to boast; but still to the praise of God he must explain the glorious nature of that office, to which he was called. And let us now consider, that of this glorious Gospel we all partake. The nature of the Gospel as compared with the law is the subject proposed for our meditation; and it is certainly one which ought to fill us with the deepest gratitude and joy. Suppose we had nothing to look to but the Old Testament covenant or agreement, which only offered life as the reward of a perfectly sinless obedience to all God's laws, (see Lev. xviii. 5, and Jer. xi. 3, 4,) what would become of us?

People often flatter themselves that they have kept God's law very well, because they never murdered, nor committed adultery, nor ever stole; but if we are to be judged by the law, it must be the whole law, and the spirit of the law; and then let us ask where is the man, woman, or child, that would not be condemned? For who has loved God perfectly, with the whole heart? If we have once taken His name in vain, we have broken His law as certainly as though we had committed murder. What then but eternal death could have been our lot, had it not pleased God to make a New Testament?

A testament is the last will, which a person expresses concerning the disposal of his property.

Now in the New Testament we learn what God's will is concerning the offer of eternal life. It is not called a New Testament, because God's will has changed, but because it is to us a new discovery of His will. We are no longer threatened with condemnation, unless we keep the whole law, but now we are told, "He that believeth and is baptized, shall be saved." (Mark xvi. 16.)

We have it made known to us by the New Testament, that salvation is a free gift offered to all who will accept it. We are only required to believe in the atonement of Christ, and to receive the baptism of the Holy Spirit; and these two things always go together. A true belief in the work of Christ done for us on the cross, is always accompanied by His work done in us through the Holy Ghost. For besides delivering us from the bondage of Satan by His death, Christ has also procured for us the gift of the Holy Spirit. He has not only opened the kingdom of heaven to all believers; but he has provided, at the same time, that all believers shall be made fit for heaven.

It is God's will, and His last will, that eternal life shall be His gift, through Jesus Christ, to all who believe. It is written, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved." (Acts xvi. 31.) Now, if the Israelites were dazzled by the light which shone around the face of Moses, surely we ought not to regard with indifference the brighter light of the Gospel which now shines around us. Cold indeed must be the heart, which can contemplate unmoved the love of God therein displayed. Let us only consider the largeness of the gift He offers. It is eternal life. And the freeness of it. It is offered to all.

Whosoever believeth in Christ shall not perish, but have eternal life. (See John iii. 15.)

It may be well however to observe, that as we should be condemned, if we were judged by the letter of the law, so shall we still be condemned, if we receive the Gospel only in the letter, and not in the spirit of it.

It is still true, "The letter killeth, but the spirit giveth life." To receive the glad tidings contained in the New Testament only with head knowledge, will not bring salvation. The heart must be touched with the feeling of love to Christ, and thereby become changed, or His death will profit us nothing.

EXPLANATION.

Verse 12 to 18. St. Paul goes on to observe that, (12) considering the glorious nature of the Gospel, which is so full of hope, and offering such good things, it is but right that we, the Ministers of it, should speak boldly and plainly. (13) For we have no need to hide the meaning of our doctrines, as Moses hid his face with a vail, (see Exod. xxxiv. 33) thereby signifying the obscure nature of the laws he gave, which had reference to the Gospel, but were not understood by the Jews; they could not stedfastly look to Jesus, who was the end and object intended by all those ceremonial laws, which were to be done away when He came. (14) Their minds were blinded, and even to this day the vail is not taken away from them; they do not even now understand the Old Testament, although all that was dark in it before, is now made clear to

those who receive Christ. (15) But the unbelieving Jews have as it were a vail on their hearts still, when the writings of Moses are read. (16) Nevertheless, it will not be always so; but when the house of Israel shall turn to the Lord, as we know from prophecy they will do, then the vail which now darkens their understanding shall be taken away. (17) Now the Lord Jesus is that Spirit, which, as was said in the 6th verse, giveth life; He is the author of this new, spiritual, and life-giving religion, and where He is, there is liberty. Liberty from the burdensome ceremonies of the law. Liberty from the bondage of Satan, sin and death. Liberty to serve God after a spiritual manner. (18) We then who are delivered from the vail of darkness, see clearly reflected in the Gospel, as it were in a looking glass, the glory of the Lord: and by contemplating this glory, we ourselves are gradually changed into a likeness to Him; and we go on from one degree of likeness to another, even as we are guided by the Spirit of the Lord, who works this change in us.

APPLICATION.

The Bible, a sealed book to all who receive not Jesus as their Lord and Saviour.

Where the Old Testament is explained by the New, we see that God's plan for man's salvation has been always the same from the beginning. The promise given to Adam, that the seed of the woman should bruise the serpent's head, was never lost sight of.

That seed was Christ. And "when the fulness of the time was come, God sent forth his Son, made of a woman, made under the law, to redeem them that were under the law." (Gal. iv. 4.) And during the four thousand years that passed away before He appeared, God was continually reminding men of His coming by prophecies, and by representing Him to their minds in various ways. All the lambs which were slain, and all the blood of bulls and of goats which was shed, were intended to show forth to the Jews, the Saviour, who was to come and offer Himself up as a sacrifice for us. He is the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world, and of Him those lambs were types or signs. There was scarcely any thing which God by Moses ordered to be done, but had reference in some way or other to Jesus Christ. He was the end of the law for righteousness: that is to say, it was the end or object of the law, to make men look to Christ for righteousness. But "the children of Israel could not look stedfastly to the end." "Their minds were blinded," so that they could not understand the meaning of God's appointments. And how melancholy is it to think, that even now, the Jews still continue ignorant of the true meaning of their own Scriptures. They read the books of Moses, but understand them not. How earnestly should we pray to God to turn their hearts to Himself, that the vail which now blinds them may be taken away.

But let it be observed, the Jews are not the only people who have a vail on their hearts. Many, alas, calling themselves Christians, read the Scriptures, and are ignorant of that Saviour of whom they testify. To

those who are ignorant of Christ, whether Jews or Christians, the Bible is a sealed book; to them the whole meaning is lost, for from the beginning of Genesis to the end of Revelation, Jesus Christ is the substance of the whole. His coming is foreshown in the Old Testament, and declared in the New. And until he is received into our hearts by faith, until we feel Him to be the life-giving spirit of the whole Bible, the vail is on our hearts, and we are in bondage to ignorance and sin. Where the Spirit of the Lord is, there, and there only, is liberty. All true light and knowledge consists in being able to behold the glory of the Lord, as it shines forth in the Gospel. The Gospel holds them up to our view in the most glorious light. There we see the utmost of what love could do to win our hearts. There too we see the hatred which God bears to sin, and the desire He has to bring us again to holiness.

Jesus Christ is set before us, not only as an all-sufficient Saviour, to set us free from Satan's power, but as the perfect pattern for us to copy. And into His image all are gradually moulded who thus behold him with the eye of faith.

God has determined that all who are saved by Him, shall be conformed to His image, (See Romans viii. 29) and that by means of the Holy Spirit. So then let us now consider whether in our conversation and conduct, there be a growing likeness to Christ. If not, we may be certain there is a vail upon our hearts, which makes the reading of God's word of none effect; and for the removing of this we must earnestly pray. If, on the contrary, we really do in all things desire to make Christ our example, and to follow Him, then

let us pray for a more abundant portion of His Spirit, to be enabled to press on from one degree of glory to another, aiming to be perfect, even as our Father which is in heaven is perfect.

PRAYER.

O Lord God, grant that while I seek not the commendation of men, I may be seen and known by all to be Thy disciple. I do earnestly desire that the stamp of Christ may appear in my life and conversation.

I humbly pray that Thou, the Spirit of the living God, will write Thy holy laws upon the fleshy tables of my heart. Grant, Lord, that thus I may be permitted to have confidence before Thee through Christ; not trusting in myself, or thinking that of myself I can do any good thing, but feeling that all my sufficiency is of Thee, that all my strength and power to do right must come from Thee.

Lord, teach me deeply to feel the riches of Thy love, made known to us in the New Testament. Make me thankful that I am not to be judged by the letter of the law, which worketh death. And suffer me not to receive the Gospel only in the letter; for the letter killeth, but the Spirit giveth life. O Lord, how glorious is the ministration of the Spirit. Help me to profit by it. Grant that I may not only understand the way of salvation offered to me, but that I may receive it into my heart with thankfulness and joy. O Lord, have mercy upon the blinded Jews. Be pleased to take away the vail from their hearts, and turn them unto Thyself. Teach them rightly to

understand the Scriptures, which testify of Jesus. Grant that through Him we may all obtain liberty, both from the curse and from the power of sin. Teach me to contemplate Thy glory shining out in the Gospel, and grant that I may daily be changed more and more into Thy holy image, through the power of the Holy Spirit. To Thee, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, three persons in one God, be honour and praise for ever and ever. Amen.

CHAPTER IV.

EXPLANATION.

VERSE 1 to 6. St. Paul was speaking of the dignity of the sacred office which he held, when he was led away from the subject by having made mention of the vail covering the face of Moses. He now returns to it, and says, (1) Seeing therefore that we are honoured by such a ministry, and have received so great mercy from God, we faint not; we are not to be discouraged, or driven back from our work by any difficulties. (2) But in the performance of our office, we use no dishonest means; we have nothing to do with any underhand dealings. We seek not to turn or twist the Word of God from its true meaning. We desire only to recommend ourselves to your consciences by the simple declaration of the truth, acting as in the presence of God. (3) But

if after all our faithful preaching and plain dealing, our Gospel is still not understood, it is by those men only who wilfully shut their eyes to the truth, and are therefore lost. (4) They are people of the world, and they believe not, because Satan, who is the god that rules this world, has blinded their eyes, lest the light of the glorious Gospel of Jesus Christ, by whom God is made known to us, should shine in upon them. (5) We are not seeking to advance any cause of our own. We do not in our preaching wish to exalt ourselves, but to set before you Christ Jesus our Lord. We are your servants; we are willing to labour among you to the uttermost for Christ's sake. And no wonder we are devoted to His service: (6) for God, who in the beginning commanded light to shine out of darkness, has been mercifully pleased to cause the light of knowledge to shine into our once benighted hearts, making known to us His glory as it is to be seen in the person of Jesus Christ.

APPLICATION.

The necessity of self-examination to avoid falling blindfold into hell.

It may perhaps seem strange to some, how people can go on hearing the glad tidings of the Gospel Sunday after Sunday, and yet give no heed to them. Strange indeed it may well seem, that sinners, standing on the brink of hell, should be so unconcerned to know

how they may escape eternal torment. It is quite unaccountable, until we read the explanation here given by St. Paul. He tells us that worldly people, whose object is present ease and enjoyment, have cast off God, and thereby are become (without knowing it) the servants of Satan, and he takes care to blind the eyes of all those whom he gets into his power; this being the case, they see not their danger, and therefore value not the message, which speaks to them of deliverance. They think they are rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing; and know not that they are wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked: (see Rev. iii. 17) and of course they take no delight in hearing of One who is able and willing to supply those wants, of which they are ignorant. Now if it is true, that many are in this state of delusion, fancying themselves safe when they are in great danger, would it not be well for every one to ask himself, "Is it I?" Am I one, whom Satan is beguiling to my ruin? Now no one ever owns to himself that he serves the devil, though in point of fact all worldly people are ruled by him. Therefore in order to know whether or not we are one of those whom the devil beguiles, we must ask ourselves the question, whether we serve God or the world.

Stop then, Reader, and consider this important subject. Think, from whence does your happiness spring? Do you find it in God? Does it arise from the blessed consciousness of possessing His favour? Are your thoughts turned most to earthly or heavenly things? Are your chief anxieties about the present or the future world? Is it your first

desire, and the main purpose of your life, to honour God? Such questions as these pressed home to the conscience, will make it pretty clear whose servant you are.

Now if upon this inquiry, the thought should strike you, "My heart is in the world; the Gospel is hid from me; therefore I am lost;" do not give yourself up to despair, as you may feel ready to do. That God, who first caused light to shine out of darkness, may yet cause the light of the glorious Gospel of Jesus Christ to shine into your heart. And even now, the very alarm you feel is a ray of light from Him. You are not yet lost, though you may be on the brink of ruin. But if God is pleased to open your eyes now, and show you your danger, beware how you wilfully close them again by drowning thought. If you try to divert your mind by going to your farm or your merchandise, or by seeking amusement among your family and friends, you give yourself up a willing servant to the god of this world; and you must expect spiritual blindness to come upon you worse than before. The oftener conscience is stifled, the weaker it becomes; and the more easy and comfortable you may remain for the present. But remember, if your conviction of danger at this moment be not attended to, you may never feel it again, until all is over. It is a great mistake to fancy, that the approach of death will certainly cause a sinner to be alarmed. A dead conscience wounds not. And hence it often happens, that no death-bed is more peaceful, than that of a man whom Satan has lulled to sleep.

But oh! what must be the astonishment and

error of those, whom the god of this world has blinded, when in hell they shall lift up their eyes, crying in torment! What a change from the false hopes of ignorance to the certainty of endless suffering! How much better now to consider our danger, and with ever so much distress to know the worst, that we may be led truly to renounce the world, and the prince of this world, and to turn to God, who is ready to show us mercy, and to cause the light of the glorious Gospel of Christ to shine unto us.

EXPLANATION.

Verse 7 to 12. While St. Paul and his fellow-labourers felt strongly the high honour they possessed in being made Ministers of the Gospel, they were equally conscious of their own weakness and worthlessness; which they expressed by saying, (7) We have this treasure in earthen vessels: that is to say, God has committed the privilege of instructing others in spiritual things to us poor feeble creatures, dwelling in mortal bodies, full of infirmity, in order that the glory of converting souls may be seen to be due altogether to God, and not to us. And since this is the case, since all the power comes from God, (8) though we be ever so much troubled, and surrounded on every side with difficulty, we are not distressed, we are in no anxiety; though we are placed in most perplexing circumstances, not knowing what to do, still we do not despair, knowing that God will guide us. (9) We are continually being persecuted, but we are not forsaken by God; we are cast down by

our enemies, but we are not suffered to be destroyed. (10) Thus we are bearing about with us in the sufferings of our body a continual remembrance of the dying of the Lord Jesus, that the power of the risen Jesus may be made to appear by His preserving alive our feeble bodies. (11) For we, who still continue to live, are every day exposed to death for the cause of Christ, in order, as I said before, that your faith in the power of Christ might be strengthened by seeing our deliverances. (12) So then, while the preaching of the Gospel exposes us to death, it secures to you, who receive it, eternal life.

APPLICATION.

None need despair of being useful, if their desire is simply to glorify God.

The privilege of ministering in holy things ought to be considered a treasure. But before any one can hope to prosper in the work, he must feel that of himself he is utterly unfit for it. That he is but like an earthen vessel, of mean material, frail, and easily broken; so that if his preaching prevail to the saving of men's souls, the glory may be all given to God. Man's salvation is the work of God, and God alone. Now what peace of mind will thus be given to those, who work only as God's instruments! Regarding not their own weakness, which might else cause them to despond, they look wholly to the excellency of the power, which is working by them.

In this way also may private Christians find comfort, when they desire to be of use. We may perhaps be inclined to think our powers so weak, and our opportunities so small, for doing any good, that all hope of usefulness is vain. If so, in this passage of scripture we shall find the strongest encouragement for exertion. It appears that though we cannot think too meanly of ourselves, we shall yet dishonour God, if we think that He cannot work by even the weakest instrument. If therefore we have a hearty desire that men should be saved, in order that God may thereby be glorified, we may confidently expect that our efforts for this end will be blessed. And the less we seem fitted by our own strength and ability to do any good, the more will the excellency of the power of God appear, if by us good is done. Moreover, if in addition to our own weakness we find that our attempts to lead men to Christ draw down upon us scorn and ridicule, or even persecution, still we are encouraged to persevere. St. Paul we find was troubled and perplexed, but not in despair; he had inward peace in the midst of outward persecution. And though he was cast down, as we may probably be, still he was not destroyed. He was not forsaken of God; neither shall we be, while we are in truth and sincerity seeking His glory. If we bear in mind the dying of the Lord Jesus, if we are rightly affected by the remembrance of that love which induced Him to suffer for us, we shall think but little of any sorrow, which in the path of duty we may be called to endure.

To feel sure that Christ is now risen from the dead, and that He ever liveth to make intercession

for us, this is enough. Even should death be the consequence, we shall still be willing to make known to others that Saviour, whom to know is life eternal.

We may remark further upon this passage of Scripture, that the Ministers of the Gospel ought to be regarded only as instruments by whom God is pleased to work; that the very best are in themselves weak and insufficient for the mighty purposes they are desired to accomplish; therefore all the praise and glory for the good they do must be given to God. At the same time, we are taught tenderly to bear with infirmities, seeing that they hold the treasure committed to their keeping in earthen vessels. The office is a high and holy one, demanding the utmost respect, they are but men still, men subject to like weaknesses, and infirmities, and temptations as ourselves, and demanding therefore the same forbearance and tenderness in our judgment of them, with which we also would desire to be judged.

EXPLANATION.

Verse 13 to 18. St. Paul here explains still further by what means he and his companions were supported under all their sufferings. He says, It is by the same spirit (13) that same spirit of faith, which supported I, so that we can even use his very words, and so firmly believe, therefore have I spoken." Ps. cxvi. 10. so firmly believe the truth of what we teach, at the cost what it may, we must speak. (14) For we are well satisfied even to die, knowing that God, who has raised up Jesus Christ from the dead, will also


us up through that same Jesus to the enjoyment of eternal life, and that we, and you, shall enter together into His glorious presence. (15) It is for your sakes that we suffer all things; it being our object to make known to you the abundant grace of God, so that many of you may through your thanksgivings and praises glorify Him. (16) Thus supported by faith and hope, we faint not under our trials. Though our bodies suffer, and will finally perish, yet our souls are refreshed, and gather strength every day. (17) For we feel that our present light affliction which will soon be over, is preparing us for the enjoyment of infinitely great and eternal glory; (18) while our minds are kept continually dwelling not upon things which we see, but upon those things which we do not see; for the things which are seen are soon to pass away, but the things which are not seen will last for ever.

APPLICATION.

Afflictions valuable, because they help to prepare us for heavenly joys.

The sorrows of this present life are of endless variety. There is but one remedy for them all, namely, faith. A thousand years rolled between, yet it was the same spirit of faith, which comforted David and St. Paul. And though eighteen hundred years and more have since past, faith must still comfort the afflicted, or nothing can. And according to the strength of our faith will be the measure of our support in the

hour of trial. We find the faith of St. Paul amounting to actual certainty. He not only believed, but was sure, that to die would be great gain. The peace of mind which he possessed under the constant expectation of a violent death, arose, not merely from hope, but from knowing, that he should rise again to eternal life. He knew without a doubt, that he should be introduced with all the saints of God into His glorious presence with exceeding joy. Thus the certainty of reward made him bold as a lion, and patient as a lamb. He was not to be scared from his work by temporary suffering, which was so surely to be followed with an everlasting and eternal weight of glory. It is plain then, that since faith is the only effectual support under affliction, it is for the very purpose of exciting and exercising this spirit of faith in us, so much affliction is permitted to abound. Therefore, if by faith only we can be saved. (See Eph. ii. 8.) If Christ was now to appear for judgment, would He find faith on the earth? Do the generality of



valued, that hundreds and thousands reject it altogether; and those who fancy they have accepted it, seldom think about it. See now, how lamentably low is the faith of men in general. Reader, do you feel the truth of this? Do you acknowledge that your own faith is weak? Do you wish it to be stronger? Do you desire to feel more alive to the goodness of God, and the love of Christ, in having made such glorious provision for us in the world to come? If you really do, then you will welcome affliction as a means to this end. While all things go on smooth and well, and we can fully enjoy the present, we are apt to think but little of a future world. Those who are well satisfied with what they have got, seldom give much heed to the offer of any thing better; but when God, in mercy, suffers us to fall into trouble, so that we can no longer find happiness in the things which are seen and temporal, we are much more likely to value those good things, which though unseen are of infinitely more importance, because eternal. Thus, even the heaviest afflictions may well be counted light, if felt to be working out for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory. Afflictions may be said to work out for us this glory, because they not only call forth our desires after it, but also increase our fitness for it. They exercise us in patient submission to God's will, and they exercise also our faith in His precious promises. And it is by having our wills made subject to God's will, that we are prepared for the inheritance of the saints in light. When sorrow has thus done its work

. " we have learnt to know
" The joy of grief, the blessedness of woe."

It is true that no chastening for the present se-
joyous, but grievous ; still we must count it a bliss
to be induced by any means, however painful,
change the soul-destroying vanities of a passing
for an exceeding and eternal weight of glory.

PRAYER.

O Lord, God, whatever my trials in this life
be, suffer me not to faint under them ; but grant
the thoughts of that great mercy which I have rec-
eived from Thee, may at all times support me. Teach
me to renounce all the hidden things of dishonesty.
Preserve me from handling Thy holy word deceitfully.
Grant that I may be guided in all things according to
Thy truth, and that I may live continually as in Thy
presence. O Lord, deliver me altogether from the love of
this world. Suffer not the devil, who is the god of
this world, to blind my mind ; but let the glorious
Gospel of Christ shine unto me. O Thou, who didst
command the light to shine out of darkness, do
thou shine into my heart, to give me the light of the
knowledge of Thy glory, as it is displayed to us in
the person of Jesus Christ. And if thou art pleased
to enlighten me, let me never forget how unworthy
I am in myself. Make me sensible that all which
thou dost give me is, as it were, treasure hid in an earthen
vessel. Make me humble, but make me diligent
always according to my ability to show to other

though I may be cast down and afflicted in spirit, still let it comfort me to know that Thou wilt never forsake me. Let it comfort me to bear in mind always the dying of the Lord Jesus, and the life also of Jesus, so that if death work in my body, life may also be worked in my soul. Lord, give to me the same spirit of faith which supported David and St. Paul, and which led them to speak boldly to others of the things they so firmly believed. Grant that I may be sustained under every sorrow by knowing, that Thou who didst raise up the Lord Jesus, wilt also raise me up by Jesus. And though my outward man perish, grant that the inward man may be renewed day by day. Enable me to count the heaviest affliction light, and but for a moment, through the hope that it may work out for me a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory. Lord, teach me more and more to look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen, because the things which are seen are temporal, but the things which are not seen are eternal. Grant these my humble prayers for Jesus Christ's sake. Amen.

CHAPTER V.

EXPLANATION.

Verse 1 to 8. This chapter is a continuation of the last. St. Paul is telling the Corinthians what it was that sustained him and the other persecuted

Christians under their sufferings ; and he pro-
be the power of faith. In the prospect of m
they were undismayed ; because they could
We know that if this body of flesh, this frail
in which we now dwell, were to return to th
which it is made, we should find a better h
prepared for us by God, much to be preferre
thing here below, and which will endure for
heaven. (2) In fact, we are now in a suffer
and therefore earnestly desire the time wher
exchange our present covering for our heav
(3) Since we know that being clothed there
shall no longer be naked or destitute of an
(4) For we who are in this earthly body d
being burdened with many infirmities ; but
that we merely desire to get rid of our prese
ence ; no. We are longing to put on a better
and to exchange this mortal state for an
one. (5) Now He who has given us this

APPLICATION.

The faith of St. Paul held forth for our imitation.

What a delightful state of mind was St. Paul's, as exhibited to us in these verses ! How much to be desired ! How earnestly ought we to watch, and pray, and strive to walk as he did, by faith and not by sight. But do all men really feel this ? No. With many the world, and the things of the world, are so highly prized, that there is no hearty desire after such a heavenly state of mind. It is not till death is at hand, that people for the most part would wish to be like St. Paul ; and then it is too late. Some will excuse themselves by saying, that it is not to be supposed that any but an Apostle could attain to such a state of feeling ; but this is mere self-deception. That same Spirit, which worked this faith in St. Paul, is offered to us ; and if we have it not, it is because we ask it not ; it is because we desire it not. Will not our heavenly Father give His Holy Spirit to them that ask Him ? (See Luke xi. 13.) The truth is, that before we can walk by faith, there must be such a deadness to the pleasures of sense, as worldly-minded people have no wish for. They cannot be brought to think it desirable ; and till they do truly and heartily desire it, they have, of course, no prospect of attaining to it. The love of the world must be subdued in the heart, before there can be a willingness to depart

out of it. It is natural, to wish to be where we think we shall be best off. Let us now compare our feelings respecting death with those of St. Paul; and if the difference be found very great, let us not seek for reasons why it should be so; but let us acknowledge that it ought not so to be. If sin is thoroughly hateful to us, the struggles with a corrupt nature will naturally lead us to groan, being burdened; and we shall earnestly desire to be clothed upon with a nature, wherein sin will be known no more. If Jesus Christ is more precious to us than all we love besides, then we shall not cling to a body which, while we remain in it, must separate us from our Lord. If it is our chief desire to see Him as He is, and to serve Him as we ought, we shall certainly be willing rather to be absent from the body, that we may be present with the Lord. But if this is not the case, if we prefer the present state of our existence to that which the Gospel offers to our view, we must conclude that there is either a want of faith in Christ, or of love to Him; in which state we are either not safe, or not happy. Let us then earnestly pray, that we may know for a certainty that we have a house eternal in the heavens, and that we may be made willing rather to go to it, than to remain at home in a body of sin and death.

EXPLANATION.

Verse 9 to 12. Though the Apostle was looking forward with longing desire to the enjoyment of such happiness beyond the grave, as can never be found

re below, yet he did not allow the thoughts of the future so to occupy his mind, as to make him inattentive to the duties of the passing hour. Far from it. It was love to his Saviour which made him desire to depart and be with Him, and the same love led him to labour diligently to please Him, whether in His presence or in His absence. And he urges others to diligence also in the work of the Lord by this solemn warning: (10) We must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that every one may receive the reward of his conduct during life, according as he shall have done good or evil. (11) And it is because we know the terror which the Lord will bring upon his enemies in that day, that we do earnestly endeavour to persuade men now to escape from the wrath to come. The sincerity of our intentions in so doing is known to God; and we trust also that it is made plain to your consciences. In saying this, our object is not (12) to commend ourselves to you, but to give you an occasion of joy on our account, and that you may have wherewith to answer those who glory in their outward conduct, but are not sincere in heart.

APPLICATION.

Faith which worketh by love, the ground of Christian assurance.

We find people sometimes objecting against the doctrine of assurance by saying, that confidence leads to carelessness.

Such is the language of those who wish to refer themselves to the absence of that assured hope alone can give peace to an awakened mind. Those who rightly understand the nature of Christian assurance, know that it is the offspring of love, and that real faith is an active principle. Being thoroughly convinced that there was laid upon him, through Christ, a crown of glory that fades away, was filled with joy and love. And what is the natural consequence? Why, all other feelings are swallowed up in the desire to serve and please the Master who had done such great things for him. Therefore, whether absent from the Lord in this world or present with Him in the next, he had no other object, and that was to obtain the approbation of whom he loved. This is the proper fruit of love, and this is the fruit we must bring forth, if we hope to stand undismayed before the judgment seat of Christ. There we shall receive the reward of our conduct during life, according to that which has been done, whether it be good or bad. Now, in the estimation of God nothing is accounted good but that which springs from love to Him. When we consider that death is likely to be our doom in the great judgment, we should ever be remembered that a thing is good or bad, according to the motive from which it is done. Let us then ask ourselves, are we labouring to obtain the approbation of Christ? Is it our first aim in all we say and do to be accepted of Him? Is it not love to Him which animates our conduct? (however fair a show we may make before men) the terrors of the Lord await us in that day. Let us then know the truth, and not deceive ourselves.

alse hopes, such as many indulge in, founded upon their leading, what the world calls, good lives. There is no other foundation on which we can safely build our hopes for eternity than that which is laid in the Gospel, which is Jesus Christ.

And those who are building on this sure foundation may thereupon safely raise the strongest assurance of acceptance with God; and without commending themselves, may yet find an occasion to glory in the grace of Christ; which makes them to triumph over the power of sin, and over the fear of death.

EXPLANATION.

Verse 13 to 15. St. Paul goes on to say, (13) Supposing our conduct sometimes appears to you extravagant, so that you think us out of our minds, it arises from the warmth of our zeal towards God; and if we do restrain ourselves, it is for your sakes; it is with the hope of increasing our influence over you, that we may be able to do you the more good. (14) It is the thought of Christ's astonishing love which constrains us; which, as it were, obliges us to labour zealously in His service. We reason thus: if Christ died for all, then were all spiritually dead, all were under condemnation of death. (15) Then, since He died for all, it must certainly be expected that those who are made spiritually alive through Him, should not henceforth live merely to please themselves, but that they should be devotedly given up to His service, who died for them and rose again.

APPLICATION.

That we should ask ourselves, for what end and object
am I living.

Nothing can be more plain than the duty of devoting to the service of Christ that life, which He purchased by the sacrifice of His own. In the case of one man's dying for another, we should feel very powerfully the debt of gratitude which was due. Let us try to fancy such a case. Suppose we had been condemned to death, and a friend had come forward and given his life in our stead, can we believe it possible that such an instance of devoted attachment could ever be forgotten? And suppose he had left behind him a widow and children, should we be likely to neglect them, or to think any kindness which we could show them too much? No; the natural heart of man revolts from such a thought. But, strange to say, we are not as much affected with the idea of a God suffering in the stead of His creatures, as of one man dying for another. That men spiritually dead should be insensible to such love is not surprising, for it is a proof of death not to feel. But where a spiritual life is begun, it is strange indeed if love for Christ does not follow.

Reader, do you believe that all without Christ are dead? and that if you live, you live only because Jesus Christ died for you, and rose again? Does this view

of the love of Christ constrain you to serve Him in return? Consider, for whom do you live? For yourself, for the promoting of your own happiness; or are you living for Christ, for the promoting of His honour and glory? Is your love to Him such a powerful principle, that it is likely to carry you so far, that men of the world will be ready to say you are beside yourself? Or if you restrain the expression of your feelings, is it for the sake of others? Is it from your anxiety, lest by your zeal you should injure the cause you have so much at heart?

Some people think this prudent caution influences them, when, if they would sift their motives to the bottom, they would find that, instead of their zeal being checked with a view to further usefulness, it is chilled by the fear of being either blamed or laughed at by their neighbours.

The truth is, that with most people, love is so cold, and zeal so dead, that they can in no wise be said to resemble St. Paul.

Let us not however seek to excuse our lukewarmness, by saying that such a burning love and zeal as his was, is not now common in the world. Be it ever remembered, that the Scripture standard is that by which we shall be judged, and not the standard of the world. The language then of Scripture is, "They which live should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto Him which died for them, and rose again." Let it be our aim and endeavour then, by God's help, to live up to this standard.

EXPLANATION.

Verse 16 to 21. St. Paul having declared himself given up to the service of Christ, now goes on to show that an entire change of heart and life is the only proof of a saving faith in Him. Of himself and his fellow-labourers he thus speaks, (16) Henceforth we have done with earthly notions and principles, our conduct towards men is no longer influenced by outward circumstances of distinction. And though we had once earthly feelings, concerning Christ, some valuing themselves on having seen Him while in the flesh, others expecting Him to establish a temporal kingdom, yet now henceforth we regard Him no longer in any such manner. Our views and feelings, from having been of a worldly nature, are now become altogether spiritual. (17) Therefore, you see that, if a man be really joined by faith to Christ, he becomes a new creature; he is entirely changed in his habits and in his principles; all his old feelings pass away, and he becomes in all respects a new man. (18) Now, all this is the work of God, who is mercifully pleased to be reconciled to us through Jesus Christ, and has given to us, His Ministers, the office of proclaiming this reconciliation; (19) that is to say, we are to make known, that God, in the person of Christ, has provided a means of reconciling mankind to Himself, so that their sins need no longer be charged to them, and that to us He has committed this message of pardon. (20) Now then, we are ambassadors for Christ, we act as His representatives, and it is there-

fore God who is beseeching you by us to listen to His mercy. We, as standing in Christ's stead, do pray you to accept this offer of being reconciled to God. (21) For God has caused Him, (that is Jesus Christ,) who was perfectly free from sin, to be a sin-offering, a sacrifice for the atonement of our sins, that we, through His merits, might be accounted righteous before God.

APPLICATION.

A new nature necessary to salvation.

Verse 17. Let us observe here the certain effect of a real faith in Christ. It is an entire change of character. It is so complete a change as to be described here as a new creation. The man who is in Christ becomes a new creature. But people are sometimes heard to say, that they do not see this great difference between professing Christians, and men of the world; that some who make no pretence to religion, are more amiable and lovely in their conduct than those who do. In reply to this, we may answer, "The Lord seeth not as man seeth; for man looketh on the outward appearance, but the Lord looketh on the heart;" and He may see a great change perhaps where we do not perceive it. The fact is, that the change which takes place, when a man becomes a real Christian, is perfect and complete in regard to the principles which direct his conduct; while it is not perfect as regards the conduct itself. The object he is aiming at is altogether new, the motives which influ-

ence his actions are altogether different. And it must not be forgotten, that the motives of our actions, and the principles which rule our lives, are what determine our character in the sight of God. One man who is blessed with an amiable temper, may be kind, gentle, and loving towards his fellow creatures, without any desire of regulating his conduct by what is right before God; while another, whose temper is naturally bad, may be far less pleasing to man, and yet in the sight of God more acceptable, because he is struggling against his evil nature, from a desire to be altogether what God would have him to be. At any rate, let the conclusions be what they may, which we are inclined to draw from our observations on mankind, one thing is clear, the word of the Lord standeth sure; and it is written, "If any man be in Christ, he is a new creature." Therefore, if we hope to be saved, we must have some proof that we are renewed in our nature, or, as the Scripture elsewhere expresses it, "born again." (See John iii. 3.) Those only are free from condemnation, who are in Christ. And those only have proof that they are in Christ, who feel that old things are passed away, that all things are become new.

Of that reconciliation with God, which Ministers are commissioned to offer to mankind.

Verse 20. An ambassador is a person appointed by a king and his government to conduct their affairs for them in a foreign land. He is their representative, and if the nations have been at war, he is the person to declare in the name of his sovereign on what

terms peace may be made. He is employed to make known in all respects the will of his sovereign, whose honour is committed to his care. Such is the high and important office of an ambassador; and such is the office held by the Ministers of the Gospel. They are ambassadors for the King of kings. They are commissioned to convey to rebellious man the good news that God is willing to be reconciled, and to make known the terms of admittance into favour. Both Ministers and people should seriously reflect upon the nature of this appointment. Ministers should consider, that God having committed to them the word of reconciliation, an awful responsibility rests with them faithfully to deliver it. And the people who are blessed with an appointed ministry thus commissioned, should give most earnest heed to the things declared by those who speak with such authority. But, alas, how slow are men in general to listen to the word of reconciliation. The terms on which it is offered offend their pride. They are not easily brought to think that, they have no righteousness of their own; and that if they are to be accounted righteous at all, it must be in and through another. This however is the language which Ministers must hold. They can tell mankind of no other reconciliation than that which is offered them by God, through Christ. By His death upon the cross, sin is done away; so that to them who accept of Christ's atonement, God will no more impute their trespasses; that is to say, He will not charge them with their sins. But those who seek to establish their own righteousness, instead of accepting the righteousness of God in Christ must perish.

Surely we ought to consider that God would not have suffered Him who had no sin, to be made a sin-offering for us, to be given up as a sacrifice, and to bear the punishment of our sins, if we could have pleaded our own cause, if we had had any righteousness of our own to offer. When we think of the immensity of the price paid for our redemption, it shows us more than anything else can, how great was our guilt, which we, alas, are so slow to acknowledge. Only let the mind dwell upon the way in which a reconciliation has been effected; that it was God giving Himself to suffer that He might spare His people, and then how astonishing it seems that man should need to be intreated, as if it were a great favour to accept of mercy. If we did not daily see and feel how hard are the hearts of men, we could not believe that one part of a Minister's duty is to beseech, and pray, saying, "be ye reconciled unto God."

PRAYER.

O gracious and merciful God, deliver me from the love of this vain world. Grant me a strong and lively faith in Christ. Enable me so to believe in Him, that I may know that when my earthly tabernacle is taken down, I have a home of Thy building, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens. Lord, teach me to desire this change; to desire to be clothed upon with this house which is from heaven; since, if I were but thus clothed, I should be naked no more. Oh, make me to feel and groan under the burden of sin, from which I can

never be wholly free while in this tabernacle of flesh. But suffer me not impatiently to desire to be unclothed. Incline my heart to wait submissively in humble longing for that time, when this mortality shall be swallowed up of life. Grant me this strong faith, and lively hope, for it is Thou only that can work it in me. To Thee only I look; to Thee do I pray for the gift of the Holy Spirit, to enable me to feel thus confident in the prospect of death. Help me to walk by faith, not by sight, and to be willing rather to be absent from the body, that I may be present with Thee. O make me to labour diligently, that, whether present or absent, I may be accepted of Thee. Keep up in my mind a remembrance, that we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, to receive according to the things done in the body, whether good or bad. Lord, if Thou hast mercifully taught me to fear Thy judgments, help me to persuade others also to flee from the wrath to come. Give me a real anxiety for the souls of my fellow creatures. Make me to be sincere in desiring their good, and not to be seeking my own praise. Make me very zealous for Thine honour, not afraid of scorn or blame, while truly seeking to please Thee. Make me discreet in my conduct towards others. Give me good judgment in all things. Let a sense of the great love of Christ constrain me to a diligent devotion of myself to His service. Teach me not to live to myself, but unto Him who died for me, and rose again. Henceforth preserve me from all worldliness of mind. Grant that it may be seen and known that I am in Christ, by my becoming altogether a new creature. Grant that all old things may pass away, and that all

things in me may become new. Incline the hearts of all men gladly to receive the word of reconciliation, and thankfully to accept of that mercy wherewith Thou hast reconciled the world unto Thyself by Jesus Christ, who for our sakes was made an atonement for sin, that we through Him might be made righteous in Thy sight. To whom, with Thee, and the Holy Ghost, be all honour and glory, world without end. Amen.

CHAPTER VI.

EXPLANATION.

VERSES 1 and 2. In the last chapter St. Paul had described himself and his companions in the ministry, as ambassadors for Christ, bearing a message of mercy, and exhorting men in the name of God to accept it.

(1) Now he says, we also in our own persons, being workers together with God, do beseech you not to let the glad tidings of this mercy sound in your ears in vain. (2) Remember those words in the prophecy of Isaiah, (chap. xlix. 8.) wherein God the Father declares Himself willing, at the time which He had appointed, and made acceptable to Himself, to receive the intercession of Christ in behalf of mankind. That acceptable time is now come. Now is the day, when salvation is fully and freely offered to you.

APPLICATION.

Salvation from hell, an offer which no one can accept
without gratitude.

Reader, if you have not already closed with the offer of eternal life through Christ, now is the time to do so. Now while it is once more placed before you. Yes, now is the time. To-morrow is never ours: we have but the disposal of the present moment. Therefore now, while the day of salvation lasts, while the day lasts in which you may be saved, think of your danger; consider the hell that awaits you while sin remains unpardoned, while you are unreconciled to God! Is an eternity of torment nothing? Is it a small matter whether we spend our endless existence in torturing agonies, or in perfect bliss? If now the contemplation of your danger makes you tremble, if your past neglect of God now stares you in the face, and makes you feel yourself a sinner deserving hell, now surely you will not receive the grace of God in vain. The voice of mercy, and of reconciliation, will surely now be sweet. You will be glad and rejoice to know that God the Father has heard the intercession of Christ in your behalf, that He has accepted the atonement made by Him for your sins upon the Cross. And now behold, this is what you may believe, this is what you are expected to believe with a heart overflowing with joy, gratitude, and love. Of course if you see that the burden of sin is ready to sink you

into hell, you cannot receive salvation from such a dreadful doom without devoted love in your heart to Him who saves you. At any rate, unless this love does reign in your heart, you have no proof that yours is a saving faith.

EXPLANATION.

Verse 3 to 10. St. Paul having strongly urged the Corinthians to accept the grace of God offered to them, goes on to say: (3) As for ourselves, we are most anxious not to give you offence in any thing, that we may in no wise hinder the success of our preaching. (4) On the contrary, we hope that we are proving to you the excellency of religion by behaving as becomes the Ministers of God, in patiently enduring affliction, want, and all manner of distress; (5) by our conduct when scourged and imprisoned, when in tumults, and when oppressed with labour, and weary with watchings and fastings; (6) by our conducting ourselves with purity and wisdom, with forbearance and kindness; by the Holy Ghost influencing our hearts and lives, by the sincere love we feel for you and for all men; (7) by our still continuing to preach the word of truth, by the power of God, which bears witness to that truth by signs and wonders; by the armour of a righteous life, which protects us against the slanderous attacks of our enemies. (8) In this way we pass unmoved through honour and dishonour, evil report and good report. We are often considered deceivers, though we are in truth faithful Ministers of Christ. (9) We

are looked upon by some as mere nobodies, obscure and unknown; yet by others are well known, as the instruments of their present and eternal happiness; and though continually exposed to death, yet behold we are still alive. By all these afflictions our heavenly Father suffers us to be chastened, but not killed. (10) Thus as regards our outward circumstances we are sorrowful, but inwardly we are always rejoicing. Though poor as concerns the things of this world, we yet are making many truly rich by conferring upon them spiritual blessings; and while having nothing in the way of property, which we can call our own, we are still possessing all things really needful for us.

APPLICATION.

What religion teaches us to avoid, and what it enables us to practise.

From the example of St. Paul here set before us, we may learn many things. In the first place, we see that it is the duty of a Christian to avoid giving offence in any thing; that is to say, unnecessary offence; for it is a great mistake, if from the fear of offending the opinions and prejudices of the world, we suffer ourselves to do anything which conscience condemns; thereby sacrificing the favour of God to the favour of men. But that we may not fall into so great an error, let us mark the motive which influenced St. Paul. It was not the approbation

of the Corinthians that he laboured to secure; but it was the glory of Christ. His words are, "that the ministry be not blamed." His concern was to do nothing by which dishonour might be brought upon the cause committed to him. Let us keep the same object in view. Let us strive so to act, that our religion be not blamed, that the cause of Christ suffer not in our hands; and then in our desire to give no offence, we shall not be led to make any sinful compliances with the customs of the world. Again, from the example of St. Paul we may observe, it is not enough that Christians give no offence; it is not enough for them to be harmless and irreproachable; they must give besides some positive proofs of the power and efficacy of their religion, both as regards doing and suffering. Such trials as St. Paul experienced are not likely to befall us; but though we may not be exposed to stripes and imprisonments as he was, still afflictions and distresses are more or less the portion of us all. All have therefore the opportunity of approving themselves as the disciples of Christ, by the patience and faith with which these are endured. Persecution may not be our lot; still there are difficulties, and there are provocations, to be met with in the daily walk of life, sufficient to prove how far we are guided in our conduct by purity of intention, by the wisdom which is from above, and by that love unfeigned which the Holy Ghost alone can work in the heart. Though it may not be our business to preach the word of truth, yet we must show that the word of truth is our guide; that we are sustained in our course by the power of God; and that by acting righteously,

that is to say, conscientiously before God, we are strengthened as it were with armour on the right hand and on the left, and enabled to persevere, whether it be through honour or dishonour, through evil report or good report. Nothing puts our religion more to the trial than being able to stand ridicule, being willing to be called a deceiver and a hypocrite, while the heart can testify to its truth before God. But the effect of religion is seen most strikingly in its power to turn all the bitters of life to sweet; converting sorrow into a source of joy; causing the poor to feel themselves exceedingly rich; and making those who may really be said to have nothing, to count themselves possessed of all things. Now let us compare ourselves in this manner with the character of St. Paul, and having taken into consideration the different circumstances in which we are placed, let us each one ask himself, and fairly answer the question, Am I approving myself a true and faithful follower of the Lord Jesus Christ?

EXPLANATION.

Verse 11 to 18. St. Paul here makes a most affectionate address; (11) Oh! my Corinthian friends, you see how we love you; how freely we have spoken to you, because our hearts are so full. (12) If there has been any thing wanting between us, I am sure it has not been on our side; you have never found any coldness in us, but your hearts I fear are somewhat cold and contracted. (13) How-

ever now in return for our unbounded love to you, (and I speak to you as to my children) henceforth let your hearts be more enlarged, more open to receive us cordially. (14) Now let me give you some advice. Do not you form any close connexion either by marriage, or in any other way, with those who are unbelievers. What fellowship can there be between that righteousness which is required of you as disciples of Christ, and that unrighteousness which prevails in the world? or what communion can there be between you who are enlightened by the Spirit, and those who are still in the darkness of ignorance and sin? (15) For what sort of agreement can there be between Christ and the devil? or what has a disciple of Christ in common with one who is an infidel? (16) And again, what has a temple of God to do with idols? And remember, you are the temple of the living God; to you, who are now His people, He has said "I will dwell in them, and walk in them; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people." (See Lev. xxvi. 12.) (17) Therefore you may well suppose you hear the Lord calling to you, and saying, Come out from the company of sinners; separate yourselves from them; have nothing to do with that which is unclean; and I will receive you, (18) and will be a Father unto you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty. (See Isa. lii. 11. Jer. xxxi. 1. xxxii. 38).

APPLICATION.

Showing that the nature of the Christian character requires separation from the world.

By the most powerful arguments which could be used, the real Christian is here warned against forming any connexion with those, who are not the children of God.

Some people are inclined to think, that these directions were intended only for the times of the Apostles; that we being all believers, they are not applicable to ourselves. Would to God that this were true! Would to God there were now no unbelievers! The fact is, such opinions are held only by those, who are, alas, ignorant of what it is to be a believer in Christ. They do not deny that Jesus Christ lived as an example, and died as an atonement for mankind; and this they consider makes a believer. With such low views as these of the Christian character, no wonder if the language of St. Paul be misunderstood. But there are others who have experienced the renewing, transforming effects of real religion, who have tasted of the heavenly gift, and been made partakers of the Holy Ghost; and these know very well, that something more than a bare assent to the truths of the Gospel is necessary to form a true believer. To such the Apostle addresses himself, and says, "Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers." By which he probably means

to refer chiefly to marriage, though the same rule applies equally to all connexions formed with our own consent. When people marry, they are linked together for life in such a manner as may in some sort be compared to the yoking together of horses or oxen. We can well imagine the misery of putting together a dull ox with a fiery horse; how wretchedly would they draw together; and not less unhappy must be the union of a true believer with one still under bondage to the god of this world. Christian reader, consider well the solemn language of St. Paul in this passage of Scripture. Reflect deeply upon the nature of our high calling in Christ, and the caution it requires to walk worthy of it. You are living in the midst of a world, to the principles of which your principles are as much opposed, as light is to darkness. You are a member of the body of Christ, and surrounded by those who are the children of Belial. Again, you are the temple of the living God; in you the Holy Spirit is pleased to dwell; while yet, on every side, you are tempted to worship those vain idols, which the world is continually offering to you. Surely upon making such reflections as these, it must appear plain, what necessity there is for obeying the command, "Come out from among them, and be ye separate;" it must plainly appear how needful it is to avoid all unnecessary intercourse with a world lying in sin; how needful to avoid forming any connexion, but with those who will help, and not hinder, us in walking as becomes the sons and daughters of God. In marriage especially, being the most lasting of all unions, we should be careful to choose for our companion

one, with whom we may hold communion in spiritual things. But the principle holds equally good with regard to every connexion we may form. For instance, if a master wants a servant, or a servant wants a place, the object of a Christian in either case should be to supply his wants from among the family of God. The link which is formed between master and servant, will thus become mutually pleasant by reason of the tie, which binds them both to the living God. If we read the twenty-second and twenty-third verses of the twelfth chapter of Hebrews, we shall see into what noble company the believer has admission. The believer walks by faith, not by sight; therefore he is said to be already come into the company of angels, to the general assembly and church of the first-born, and to the spirits of just men made perfect. If such be the society into which a real Christian is privileged to enter, and with which in imagination, if not in reality, he delights to dwell, how fearful must be our condition, if we find pleasure in the company of those, who are the enemies of our God! Necessity may oblige, but inclination never will lead Christians to be connected with any, who are not heirs together with themselves of the grace of life. (See 1 Pet. iii. 7.)

PRAYER.

O merciful God, suffer me not, I humbly beseech Thee, to receive Thy grace in vain. Now, when salvation is freely offered, help me fully to accept it. Teach me to walk as becomes a redeemed sinner.

Make me most carefully to avoid giving any just cause of offence to any one, that my religion be not blamed. Give me grace to believe in such a manner that I may prove myself to be a faithful follower of the Lord Jesus, by patiently bearing all afflictions and distresses, by acting with purity of intention, and with the wisdom which is from above, by showing kindness to all, and by bringing forth the fruits of love unfeigned through the power of the Holy Ghost. Grant that I may be guided in all things by the word of truth, and be supported in all difficulties by Thine almighty power. Enable me sincerely and uprightly to walk before Thee, so that the armour of righteousness may defend me on the right hand and on the left, while passing through honour and dishonour, through evil report and good report. If I be called a deceiver, help me to take it patiently, while my heart is true before Thee. If thou art pleased to chasten me with affliction, enable me still to rejoice in the midst of sorrow. If I am poor in this world's goods, yet grant that I may be rich in faith towards Thee, and enable me to make others rich also with the knowledge of the Gospel. If I am even so destitute in my outward circumstances that I possess nothing, still grant that I may find all things in Thee. O Lord, if Thou in mercy hast given me the light of knowledge, and the righteousness, which is through faith in Christ, grant that I may never willingly unite myself to those, who are yet in sin and darkness. Impress upon my mind this solemn truth, that if a believer, then am I one with Christ, and Christ with me; then am I the temple of Thee, the living God; and make me

tremble to think of taking any part with those, who are the children of the devil. Oh, as Thou hast said, so be it unto me; mercifully dwell in me, and walk in me; be Thou my God, and make me Thy child. Teach me to come out from the world, and to be separate, and not to touch an unclean thing, that Thou mayest receive me now, and make me Thine own for ever. Through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

CHAPTER VII.

EXPLANATION.

VERSE 1 to 8. The last chapter ends with a mention of the gracious promises of God to His people, that He will dwell in them, and walk in them; that He will be their Father, and that they shall be His sons and daughters. The first verse of this chapter is a continuation of the subject: (1) Having then these promises, dearly beloved, let us endeavour to cleanse away all sin: not only sins of the body, outward sins, in word and action, but sins of the spirit, such as evil thoughts and bad passions, and to strive to be perfect in holiness through fear of offending so merciful a God. St. Paul then turns back to the subject he left at the 13th verse of the last chapter, and says, (2) Receive us to your hearts with affection, for we have not done wrong towards you in any way: we have not

taught wrong doctrines to corrupt your minds ; neither have we defrauded you of your goods. (3) Now I say not this, wishing to imply any reproach to you, for, as I told you before, you lie so near our heart, that we would be willing even to live and die in your service. (4) And indeed I am boldly confident of you, and greatly glory in you now, insomuch that I am filled with comfort and joy in the midst of our tribulation. (5) For when we came into Macedonia, we were in a most distressed state, troubled on every side ; we had to bear cruel opposition from without, and sad fears within. (6) But that God, who is mercifully pleased to comfort those who are afflicted, did comfort us by the arrival of Titus. (7) And not only by his coming, but also, because he was able to tell us of the consolation, wherewith he himself had been comforted, when on his visit to you, he found in you such an earnest desire to see me, and such sincere mourning for sin. So that my joy was the greater, from the contrast with the grief which went before. (8) For though my letter gave you pain, I do not now repent having sent it ; though I did once feel inclined to repent. I see now, that though that letter did cause you pain, it was only for a time.

APPLICATION.

A child of God will prove himself such by holiness in heart and life.

The Bible is full of great and precious promises, intended for all who will believe them. But then, we accept the mercy promised, we must not forget the duty required of us in return. If God is so merciful towards us His rebellious people, as to be willing to receive us again into His family, and treat us as sons and daughters, what less can be expected, than that we should act as becomes the children of a pure and holy God? By nature we are evil both in heart and in life. Since the inward principle is bad, nothing good can spring from it; no more can pure water can flow from a corrupt spring. But when we are adopted into the family of God, we become new creatures; we are born again; and must prove that we are so, by being cleansed from our former filthiness, both in regard to outward actions, and to inward thoughts and feelings. But alas, there are some, who boastfully apply to themselves all the promises of Scripture, while their hearts are so hard, that neither love nor fear will induce them to part from their sins. They talk of their privileges as the Lord's people, while they prove themselves servants of the devil, by indulging the sinful desires of the flesh, and giving way to the evil tempers of an unchanged heart. This is indeed an

awful delusion. Nothing can be more false or fatal, than for any one to believe himself a child of God, who is not most watchfully and anxiously endeavouring to cleanse himself from all filthiness of flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God.

Faith in God's love particularly needful in trying times.

Verse 6. It may be well here to observe, that be it who or what it may that affords us relief in times of trouble, God must be acknowledged as the Author of our consolation. He it is who comforteth them that are cast down. Now when we are deeply afflicted, when our flesh has no rest because of trouble on every side, we may find great encouragement by reflecting that this is His merciful character, that God is known as a God who comforteth those who are cast down; and we may therefore feel it reasonable to hope and believe, that if we look to Him for relief, He will in His own good time raise us up again. In the midst of our tribulation something perhaps most unlooked for may arise to cause us to be "filled with comfort," and to be "exceeding joyful." It is most necessary that those who are in any circumstances of distress, whether from outward fightings or inward fear, should dwell upon such passages of Scripture as this, that so they may strengthen in themselves the conviction that God is a tender and compassionate Being, ready to afford relief when the proper time shall come. We are, alas, too ready to fall into the snare of the enemy, who tries to make us ad-

sin to sorrow, by tempting us to indulge in our afflictions hard thoughts of God.

EXPLANATION.

Verse 9 to 16. St. Paul had said that the account which Titus brought from Corinth had given him comfort; but that he might not be misunderstood, he thus goes on to explain himself: (9) Not that I rejoice in your having been made sorrowful, but I rejoice that your sorrow has led you to repentance; for since you have sorrowed in a right and godly manner, you will not be the worse, but the better for it. (10) For that sorrow which springs from a regard to God, causes a repentance which will lead to salvation, and which will never afterwards be regretted: but the sorrow which springs from worldly causes, and is the expression of merely natural feelings, leads to death, the death of the soul, and perhaps also of the body. (11) For we may observe in your own case, how a godly sorrow works for good; for what carefulness it produced in you to remove those abuses in your church, which had been pointed out, that you might be clear of guilt; what indignation against the sin committed; what fear of the like happening again; what a desire to be approved of by me; what zeal you showed; I may even say, what revenge against sin. So that as a church you are clear now from all blame in the matter.* (12) In writing to you as I did, I had in view, not so much either the offender

* St. Paul here refers to the sin mentioned in the fifth chapter of his First Epistle.

himself or his father whom he had injured, as that we might show before God, and yourselves, the great care and concern which we have for you as a church and a people. (13) Therefore having so great love for you, we found great comfort from the good news respecting you which Titus brought; and our joy was exceedingly increased by seeing what joy it had caused to Titus, whose spirit was greatly refreshed by you all. (14) So that if I boasted at all to him of what I thought you would do, I have no cause to be ashamed of it. But as I have always spoken the truth to you, so the boasting which I made before Titus has proved also to be nothing more than truth. (15) His affection towards you is very great, when he calls to mind your obedience, and the reverence, and respect with which you received him. (16) I rejoice to think that thus your behaviour warrants me to place the fullest confidence in you in all respects.

APPLICATION.

The duty of weighing well the nature of our sorrow.

It is most important to remark that there are two kinds of sorrow, very different in their nature, and leading in the end to widely different consequences. The one is godly sorrow, which worketh salvation; the other is worldly sorrow, which worketh death. And these are often times most sadly mistaken the one for the other; and for this reason: sorrow always

makes people think in some way or other about God and heaven. When we are unhappy, the mind is naturally stirred up to look about for relief. God, who may never have been thought of before, will then be turned to as a last resource, when all others fail. Heaven, too, how little soever it may be loved as a place of holiness, becomes desirable as a place of happiness. In this way, the most hardened sinner will sometimes awake in the midst of his sorrows, and fancy that he has really turned to God, while yet he may be far enough off from that godly sorrow which worketh repentance, not to be repented of. Many a weary sufferer has vainly flattered himself with the prospect of shortly ending every sorrow in heaven, who in fact has never taken one step towards it, because with all his sorrow he has not sorrowed after a godly sort. Since then such mistakes are very common, let us beware how we fall into them; for it is no small matter to fancy ourselves in the way of salvation, while still walking in the pathway of death. Whenever affliction lies heavy upon us, let us inquire carefully what is the nature of our grief, and what the fruits of it. Let us put the question, Am I mourning for having sinned against God, for having forgotten Him in times past, for having loved the world more than Him? Or am I distressed only because of my present sufferings, and because my pleasure in the world is come to an end? If we answer these inquiries truly, we may know how far our sorrow is likely to work in us life or death. But in order to judge further, whether ours be a godly sorrow, or only the sorrow of the world, we must remark what will be the effects of our

sorrowing if it be after a godly sort, according to the description here given by St. Paul. In the first place we may observe, it will work in us carefulness. It will make us careful to amend wherein we have formerly done wrong, and careful to avoid falling into new sins; for, with our altered circumstances, new temptations will arise. It will make us, in short, careful to watch the thoughts which pass in our minds, and the words which come out of our mouths, through fear of falling into sin. 2dly. It will set us upon clearing ourselves: not by making out that we have done no harm, but by applying in real earnest by faith to the blood of Jesus Christ, which cleanseth from all sin. 3dly. It will raise in us indignation: indignation against ourselves to think that we should have so ill-requited the tender kindness of our heavenly Father, so little loved the Son who died for us, and so grieved the Holy Spirit who is the Comforter. 4thly. It will fill us with fear; with the dread of falling into sin again. 5thly. With vehement desire: that is to say, with a strong and ardent longing after holiness and the favour of God. 6thly. With zeal: zeal for the honour of God, and zeal for the good of our fellow creatures. Lastly, in proportion as we are grieved at our past conduct, will be the sort of revenge we shall take upon ourselves by mortifying those lusts that war in our members, and by our diligent exertion to perform every duty. And now, Reader, say, Are you sorrowing, or have you ever sorrowed after this manner? Remember the words of our blessed Lord, “Except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish.” (Luke xiii. 3.)

St. Paul's tender love towards his Corinthian people,

and his great anxiety about them, holds out a most useful lesson to all Ministers; while the respectful manner in which they took his reproof, should be considered as an example to be followed by all Christian people, in regard to their behaviour towards the appointed pastor of their parish.

PRAYER.

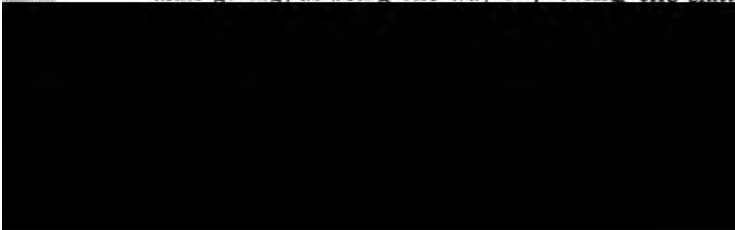
O merciful and gracious God, since Thou hast been pleased to encourage and comfort us with great and precious promises, help me to walk worthy of them. Help me to cleanse myself from all filthiness of flesh and spirit, and to become perfect in holiness through fear and love toward Thee. If it be Thy will, O Lord, to afflict me heavily, if my flesh can find no rest, and troubles press sore on every side, still grant me faith to believe that Thou who comfortest them that are cast down, wilt comfort me in due time. Enable me to believe that, notwithstanding all my tribulation, the day will come when Thou shalt yet fill me with comfort, and cause me once again to be exceedingly joyful. Lord, teach me to profit by affliction. Make me to be sorry after a godly manner, that I may receive no damage, but much good in every time of trouble. Give me grace to feel that true godly sorrow which worketh repentance not to be repented of. Grant that all men may behold in me the proof that I have sorrowed after a godly sort, by my carefulness to avoid all sin, by my zeal for every thing that is good, and indignation against every thing which is evil, and by my fear of falling into the way of temptation. Enable me so to act, that I may give

comfort and satisfaction to those who care for soul. Teach me to behave with such obedience respect to my superiors, as may cause them to have confidence in me and feel affection for me. Grant that in all things I may fulfil the duties of station and calling. Mercifully accept these prayers for the sake of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. Amen.

CHAPTER VIII.

EXPLANATION.

Verse 1 to 8. St. Paul having in the last chapter expressed the great confidence he felt in the Corinthians, turns their attention now to the subject of alms-giving, as being one way of proving the sincerity



might be hoped and expected from them generally, but something much beyond. The fact was, they had first given themselves up wholly to the Lord, and they looked to us to guide them according to the will of God. (6) So that encouraged by the good example which they had set, we begged that Titus, who had begun to interest you in this matter, would also go on to stir you up still further to the work of liberality. (7) Therefore, now, as you abound in other Christian graces, in faith, in the power of instructing others, in a right understanding of the truth, in the diligent discharge of your duties, and in love to us, we would urge you to abound also in the grace of charitable liberality. (8) I do not say this by way of command; but the forwardness of others has led me to wish that you might also, in like manner, prove the sincerity of your love.

APPLICATION.

True liberality springs from devotedness to God.

The mere fact of giving large sums of money for charitable purposes does not of itself prove the power of religion. It may be done from pride, or it may be done with some false notion, that heaven is to be purchased by alms-giving. But the motive of our giving, and the circumstances under which we give, must be taken into account before it will prove, in the sight of God, a testimony of the sincerity of our love to Him. Nevertheless, we may certainly come to this

conclusion, that let our circumstances be what they may, our Christian profession demands of us a liberality equal to, if not beyond our means; that is to say, beyond what to others might appear possible. For even under heavy trials of afflictions, and in deep poverty, we see that it is possible by self-denying exertion to be richly liberal, and to give too with abundance of joy. But mark whence such a stream of real charity springs: from a heart first wholly given to the Lord. We never find true liberality where the love of self still reigns. But where the love of God is the ruling principle, there will be also a devoted anxiety to promote the welfare of our fellow creatures, and a desire to be guided in every thing by the will of God.

EXPLANATION.

Verse 9 to 15. St. Paul had urged the Corinthians to acts of charity, by pointing out to them the example of the Macedonians; now he proposes to them another, and a much higher motive, for their making exertions in behalf of others. (9) You know, he says, what undeserved love has been shown to you by our Lord Jesus Christ; how that, though He was rich in all the glory and happiness of the heavenly world, yet for your sakes He became poor, in order that through His poverty and sufferings a way might be opened for you to become spiritually and eternally rich. (10) Upon the strength of this argument, therefore, I urge my advice, that you be ready with your charity, which is the more neces-

sary, since you once began, and seemed forward enough in the business a year ago. (11) So now, therefore, complete your work, that as there seemed a good inclination towards it, so there may be also a good performance according to the extent of your means. (12) For if there be a willingness in the mind to give largely, the gift is equally accepted of God, whether large or small, as He does not expect us to give beyond what we have got. (13) Neither do I mean that you should relieve the distress of others, so as to be brought to distress yourselves. (14) But only to make things equal. So that now you who have abundance should supply their wants; and then at another time, they out of their abundance may supply your wants, that there may be an equality. (15) According to what was written concerning the manna in the wilderness: "He that gathered much had nothing over, and he that gathered little had no lack." (See Exod. xvi. 18.)

APPLICATION.

Those who have received eternal treasure from Christ will be ready to part with earthly treasure for His sake.

When the Gospel of Jesus Christ was first preached, we find that His followers had all things in common. Their whole hearts were so given to God, their affections so set on heaven and on heavenly things, that they willingly divided their worldly goods among each other. Whether rich or poor, their only anxiety was

to have treasure in heaven. Those who had wealth were ready enough to bestow it on others who were in need, who they were sure would make a good use of it, and whose happiness was as dear to them as their own; for they were all "of one heart and of one soul." (Acts iv. 32.) This was certainly a most delightful state of things, and one we may well wish to see prevailing throughout the earth. But, alas, as things are at present, it is impossible. Because though we are now all called Christians, there is no where to be found any body of people acting upon Christian principles. Suppose the rich were now to sell their estates, and give the money to the poor, what would be the consequence? We know too well it would lead to idleness, drunkenness, and misery.

But though we are not all sufficiently under the influence of true religion to make the plan of equality desirable, that is no reason why those who are Christians indeed should not endeavour, to the utmost of their power, to alleviate the misery which abounds in the world. If we do not take the advice of St. Paul according to its literal meaning, we ought certainly to consider that the spirit of it is binding upon us to the fullest extent. We are to use our judgment as to the best means of doing good to our fellow creatures; and although that which was most desirable in the first ages of the church is certainly not so now, still we are not the less to study by self-denying exertions to add as much as possible to the happiness of others. And if we do not so act, we cannot be true disciples of that blessed Saviour, who laid aside the glories of heaven for the sake of benefiting sinful men.

Is it possible that we can be properly affected by His wonderful condescension and love to us, if we are giving way to selfish indulgences, and neglecting to supply the wants of our fellow creatures? or if we are so filled with pride as to think it beneath our dignity to consult the feelings of the poor? The strongest reason there is for making charitable exertions, is that which St. Paul here sets before us, namely, "knowing the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ." But do we know any thing of this grace? Is pardon and peace extended to us through faith in our Lord Jesus Christ? Alas! many have only heard of it with the hearing of the ear, and cannot be said to know the grace of Christ, for their hearts remain untouched. And the fruit of faith cannot of course be found, where faith is not. But supposing we do really believe that we owe eternal life to the sacrifice made in our behalf by Jesus Christ, then we shall certainly think no sacrifice too great which we can make in behalf of our fellow creatures; since our Lord is pleased to receive this in token of our love to Him. Charity done for His sake He accepts as though it were done to Himself. "Inasmuch as ye have done it unto the least of one of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me." (Matt. xxv. 40.)

EXPLANATION.

Verse 16 to 24. The Apostle now returns again to the subject he had left at the sixth verse, and says, (16) I am thankful to God that He put the same anxiety into the mind of Titus which I felt myself;

(17) so that though he accepted my exhortation, he needed it not; for being most earnest in the matter, he went to you of his own accord. (18) And we have sent with him another Christian brother, whose fame as a preacher of the Gospel is well known in all the churches. (19) And not only is he a man thus justly esteemed, but also he was appointed by the churches to travel with us in charge of your gift, which is to be administered by us to the glory of God, and as a testimony to your readiness to comply with the calls of charity. (20) We have sent this excellent man, because we wish to avoid, if possible being blamed by any one for the manner in which the abundant charity, committed to our care is administered by us. (21) We being anxious so to provide that things may appear honest, not only in the sight of God, but also in the sight of men. (22) And we have also joined with him and Titus another Christian brother, who has often proved himself most diligent in many things, and I am sure he will be even more than usually diligent now, by reason of the confidence which, in consequence of what I have said, he feels in your goodness and liberality. (23) If then there be any question made about Titus, let it be understood that he is my partner and fellow labourer in preaching the Gospel among you: or if respecting the other brethren, let them be received as messengers sent by the churches, and for the glory of Christ. (24) Therefore now I beg you will show to them, and to the churches generally, proofs of your love, and that you will justify the boasting we have made of you.

APPLICATION.

That we should be cautious to prevent any suspicion being raised against us.

From reading these particular arrangements respecting the charity collected at Corinth, we may learn that it is our duty not only to be honest in all money affairs, but also to carry them on in such a manner that our uprightness may appear not only in the sight of God, but before all men. We may observe the great humility of St. Paul in this business. He might have thought that his character stood so high no one had any right to doubt his honesty; and certainly the pride, which is in most men's hearts, would have been offended at the bare idea that any precaution against suspicion was necessary. Not so St. Paul. He was not above making arrangements which should prevent it. And this is what we ought at all times to do, not only in regard to money matters, but in all respects we should avoid giving an occasion to any man to blame us. But in general we are much more ready to complain of being ill used by others thinking ill of us, than cautious to prevent it. The duty of each one is to look at home. We may mend ourselves, but we cannot change our neighbours.

In case therefore we are at any time falsely accused, instead of thinking ourselves hardly dealt with, let us consider whether more might not have been done to prevent evil being thought or spoken of us; and let

us learn in future to follow the example of wise and humble caution set us by the blessed Apostle St. Paul.

PRAYER.

Almighty God, be mercifully pleased to grant me a measure of that grace which was so largely bestowed on the churches of Macedonia. Teach me to find joy in being richly liberal. Make me willing to give to the very utmost of my power; but first may I give myself wholly unto Thee, and have no desire but to know what Thy will is in regard to every thing.

Lord, grant that I may abound in faith and knowledge, in the diligent performance of my daily duties, in love to Thy people, and in charity. O teach me to know and feel more and more of the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ; to be more affected with a sense of His love; and since He was willing to become poor that I might be rich to all eternity, make me willing to practise all self-denial, and to exert all my powers to increase the happiness of others. Grant that in so doing I may seek not the praises of men, but Thy glory. Teach me to exercise a prudent caution in all my dealings; to avoid every thing which might give an occasion to any man to blame me. Assist me so to act that my honesty may be known not only to Thee, but may appear plainly in the sight of all men. O may the proof of my religion be seen in the whole conduct of my life. Mercifully hear and answer these prayers, for Jesus Christ's sake. Amen.

CHAPTER IX.

EXPLANATION.

Verse 1 to 7. St. Paul continues to press still further the subject of charity; he says, (1) As to the duty of administering to the necessities of the saints, it is not necessary that I should write to you. (2) For the readiness with which you were willing to comply, when this duty was placed before you, is what I have boasted of concerning you to the Macedonians, telling them that the province of Achaia, of which you form a part, was ready to make a collection a year ago; and your zeal in this respect has been the means of leading others to follow your example. (3) Notwithstanding this, I have thought it best to send the brethren to you, lest by any means the expectation I have raised concerning you should be disappointed. (4) For if any of the Macedonians should accompany me, and find you unprepared, how much should I be ashamed, to say nothing of what you would feel after all our boasting of you. (5) Therefore I thought it necessary to request the brethren to go on before, and see that this gift of yours, of which notice had been already given, should be got ready, that what you have to give may be seen to come freely, and not as it were with that ill-will, with which charity may be screwed out of a covetous man. (6) I shall not urge the matter further than by just reminding you of this

truth, that he which soweth sparingly shall sparingly; and he which soweth bountifully shall also reap bountifully. (7) But whatsoever ye do, let it be done with a willing mind, and not grudgingly; and because it must be given; for God loveth that which is given cheerfully.

APPLICATION.

The duty of encouraging one another by bestowing liberally, where we can.

Among the various methods used by St. Paul in urging the Corinthians to abound in liberal contributions is not omitted. We never find him backward in encouragement, and to express approbation of their liberality. He would excite them to exertions, not only from a view of what other churches had done, but by mentioning also what forwardness they themselves had shown upon a former occasion, and which he trusted for their comfort had proved the means of stimulating the zeal of others. Thus, he makes his own example to them a reason why they must further exert themselves. We may hence learn, that if we would lead men on to higher degrees of perfection

wished, that we were all more willing thus to treat each other; instead of being so ready to find fault with what is amiss, that we were more anxious to praise what is right; instead of seeking out the faults of one another, that we were looking about to notice what is praiseworthy, and so to comfort and encourage each other.

The necessity of being prepared for the judgment day.

Verse 4. We can easily imagine how distressing it would have been, if after all that St. Paul had said in praise of the Corinthians, they had been found on his arrival unprepared with their charity. And ought we not to consider with what shame and horror we must be covered, if after having been called Christians and counted righteous, we should still be found sinners at the great Judgment day? Shall we not be overwhelmed with unutterable horror, if after having been reckoned among believers, and after having taken our stand among the followers of Christ, we be found unprepared for His coming, having nothing to show in proof of our faith, or in testimony of our love to Him? Oh let us think frequently of that awful hour, when we must give an account of our stewardship; when according to the use or the abuse which we have made of our time, talents, and opportunities for doing good, our lot will be fixed for all eternity. And it should be remembered, that the more confident our boasting is now, in regard to our Christian privileges and

thing we can do deserves to be rewarded, clearly revealed in Scripture as God's good for the merits' sake of His Son, to deal according to our works ; therefore " he who sparingly shall reap also sparingly, and he who bountifully shall reap also bountifully," so whatever way or to whatever extent we lay out to please God, looking to Christ alone our works acceptable, we shall in no wise reward.

EXPLANATION.

Verse 8 to 15. The Apostle still continues same subject, gives another reason for being in charity. It is this: (8) God is able His gifts towards you abound to any extent fore you need not be afraid of not having for yourselves, but by trusting in Him, you will lessly abound in every good work. (9)

is enough left for seed, richly supply all your wants, and give a blessing upon what you have bestowed in charity; and may He increase to you the fruits of this your liberality. (11) So that being enriched in every way, you may be exceedingly bountiful; and that your bounty, when administered by us, may cause many to offer up thanksgiving to God. (12) For your charitable services not only supply the wants of the saints, but are abundantly productive of glory to God, by leading so many to give Him thanks. (13) For those who thus experience the benefit of your kindness, glorify and praise God for this proof of your being subject to the Gospel of Christ, as well as for your liberality towards themselves and others. (14) It also tends to God's glory by leading them to pray for you, who though they have never seen you, long to do so, for the sake of that exceeding grace which God has bestowed on you. (15) Thanks be to Him for the unspeakably precious gift of His Son Jesus Christ, through whom alone all grace is bestowed.

APPLICATION.

True charity blessed, both in this world and the next.

The manner in which St. Paul urges charity upon the Corinthians shows how very important a duty it is. A duty notwithstanding, which many, who have professed subjection unto the Gospel of Christ, are very slow to perform. Generally speaking, this

arises from a self-indulgent spirit; but in some cases it springs from a distrust of God. The fear of want is the excuse made for not extending the hand of charity; and though this may sound reasonable enough, it is often after all but a bad excuse.

God is able to make His favours abound to any extent. And experience proves that He is not only able to do so, but willing that the liberal soul should be made fat, and that he that watereth should be watered also himself. (See Prov. xi. 25.) In regard only to this world, it is therefore bad policy to be uncharitable; for “he that hath pity upon the poor lendeth unto the Lord; and that which he hath given will He pay him again.” (Prov. xix. 17.) And we often see the truth of Solomon’s words, “There is that scattereth, and yet increaseth; and there is that withholdeth more than is meet, but it tendeth to poverty.” (Prov. xi. 24.) But let us take our whole existence into account; let us consider that now is the seed-time, now is the time to sow the seed of good works, from which we may gather in a glorious harvest in the world to come; and surely when we reflect of how little value is the seed which is sown, and how inestimable the treasure to be reaped, we must feel it to be strange indeed, that men should sow so sparingly. It is certainly not sufficiently remembered, and we can hardly suppose it is believed, that as a man sows, so he shall reap. It seems by many to be altogether forgotten, that the mammon of unrighteousness may be so disposed of as to procure for us the true riches. (See Luke xvi. 11.) It is to be observed, that though our souls were not redeemed with corruptible things,

as silver and gold, but with the precious blood of Christ; yet having been redeemed at this price from the hands of Satan, we are now called upon so to use our gold and silver, and other talents, that they may be made the means of securing to us that treasure which they are wholly incapable of purchasing. Moreover, wealth now must either be laid out in such a manner as God, for Christ's sake, will accept and reward, or it will be brought forth against us in the day of judgment, as a proof of our ingratitude and unbelief. But it should be well impressed on the mind, that it is only where there is "subjection to the Gospel of Christ," that there can be charity acceptable in the sight of God. Not self-interest, but love to God for His unspeakable gift, must open our hearts to a liberal distribution of what we possess, or it will avail us nothing.

The unspeakably precious gift of Christ, given by the Father, as an atonement for the sins of the whole world, must be understood and felt, and be the motive of our exertions, or they will be rejected as the offspring of pride, and not the fruit of faith and the offering of love.

PRAYER.

O merciful God, grant me at all times a ready mind to administer to the necessities of the saints. Teach me to follow the example of St. Paul in being more ready to praise than to blame. Grant that in the day of Thy appearing I may not be found unprepared. Suffer me not to indulge in a confident

boasting which is to end in shame and confusion; but give me a good ground of confidence, that at Thy coming I may be found ready. Help me now to sow bountifully, that I may also reap bountifully. Incline my heart to give liberally, according to the utmost of my power; not grudgingly, or of necessity, but as a cheerful giver. Thou, who art able to make all grace abound toward me, make me to trust Thee for a sufficiency of all things, and to abound in every good work. Lord, increase the fruits of righteousness in me, and cause me to be so enriched as to be both able and willing to be richly bountiful, that so thanksgiving and praise may be offered by many unto Thee. O merciful God, grant that my charitable offerings may be one proof of my subjection to the government of Christ, and that Thou mayest be glorified by my liberal distribution unto all men. May Thy grace in me appear in my life and conduct to Thine own glory. To Thee be thanks and praise for ever for the unspeakable gift of Thy dear Son, our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, to whom with Thee, and the Holy Ghost, be glory and majesty, dominion and power, both now and for ever. Amen.

CHAPTER X.

EXPLANATION.

VERSE 1 to 6. In this chapter St. Paul refers again to the false teachers who had tried to prejudice the minds of the Corinthians against him; he says, (1) Now I Paul, who am said to be mean in my appearance, and weak in my behaviour when among you, though bold enough when absent, I myself, who am thus shamefully abused, do entreat you according to the meekness and gentleness of Christ, (2) and beseech you that I may not find reason to be bold, when next I am present with you, and to use that severity, which I now confidently purpose to do against some among you, who represent us as acting according to the counsel of worldly wisdom. (3) For though we do inhabit weak mortal bodies, yet we are not carrying on our warfare by merely human means. (4) The instruments we use for carrying on war against the dominion of Satan, are not of a worldly nature, but such as by the power of God are mighty to the pulling down of his strong holds. (5) It is the Divine power that is given to us, in which we trust to overcome the vain reasonings of men, to bring down every proud thing which is opposed to the knowledge of God, until every thought is brought into subjection, and made obedient to the gospel of Christ. (6) We are ready also with power to punish

those, who remain disobedient, after due time has been given to see how far you are willing to be obedient of yourselves.

APPLICATION.

How to behave when despised unjustly, or otherwise provoked.

St. Paul's conduct under the treatment he met with is an admirable lesson for us. He had been spoken of in a contemptuous and scornful manner. What is more trying to the temper? What do men in general resent more than such conduct? There is nothing more wounding to pride than to be despised. But St. Paul in reply makes use of the tenderest language. Instead of returning railing for railing, he only beseeches them with meekness and gentleness not to act in such a manner as to oblige him to prove, that he was not so weak and contemptible as they thought for. He did not wish to use severity merely to convince them that he had spirit enough to do so. He would gladly be spared the necessity of exercising his authority.

Then he calmly reasons with his adversaries; shows them their error; explains the nature of his office; tells them that his is a spiritual contest, not against flesh and blood only, but against the powers of darkness, and that his success in overcoming the strongest opposition which Satan could make against religion, proved that God was with him of a truth. However weak and contemptible they might think

him as regards his bodily appearance, or conduct, they must acknowledge that he was gifted with power more than human, when they considered that by his preaching, hearts which had been the strong-holds of Satan, were so changed, that every thought was brought into subjection to the gospel of Christ. Now in like manner, when we are unfairly treated, and without just cause are lightly esteemed, let us remember the pattern of St. Paul; let us in the first place, be careful that we behave with the meekness and gentleness of Christ, and then let us calmly explain the true state of the case, and endeavour to place our conduct in a just light. We are not, for the credit's sake of Him whose name we bear, to allow false accusation to remain unanswered; but in giving an answer, we are not to forget, that our blessed Master was meek and lowly in heart, and that the same mind must be in us which was also in Him. But oh, how difficult to attain is this lowly spirit!

Let us not then pass on, till we have further meditated on the subject of Christ's meekness and gentleness. We all greatly need assistance to become more meek, more gentle. Reader, are you not ready to say, "I am sure I do?" We shall not find a real Christian, who is not lamenting over the pride of heart, and irritability of temper, which oppose themselves to that meekness and gentleness, which ought to be a marked feature in every Christian's character. Some may have more, and some less, of this blessed spirit; but all are wanting in it.

Let us therefore meditate on the example of Christ, in order to copy it better. First, let us endeavour to

conceive the dignity of Christ. It is an idea of our dignity being insulted, which causes irritation. Now how great was His dignity ! He was the Maker of the world, and He is the Governor of the world, and is finally to be its Judge. Before His glory, the angels in heaven veil their faces, and throw their crowns at His feet. Let us consider this, and then fancy Him standing to be taunted and jeered at by creatures such as men, the work of His own hand, and whom He could have destroyed more easily than we can tread upon a worm ; meekly enduring while they spat upon Him, struck Him in the face, mocked Him with a chaplet of thorns for a crown, and a reed for a sceptre, and finally led Him forth to suffer a death of torture and shame. Had there been the smallest particle of pride in His nature, how it would have resented such treatment ! But pride, which some men admire as proper spirit, is altogether from the devil. There was none in Christ to be stirred up. As a sheep before his shearers is dumb, so he opened not His mouth. And when He did speak, oh, what words of love and pity did he utter ! “ Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do.” If anything can induce us to lay aside the pride which resents an affront to our dignity, it must be through God’s grace (without which nothing can avail) it must be the contemplation of such a scene as this.

Reader, remember when next a source of irritation arises, remember that you are a follower of the Lamb, and open not your mouth ; or not until pride and passion have been exchanged for tenderness and love.

EXPLANATION.

Verse 7 to 18. In arguing further against the false teachers, who had been so injurious to him, St. Paul goes on to say, (7) What! do you judge only of things by their outward appearances? Let me say this, if any man think himself to belong to Christ, let him consider over in his mind what are the proofs of his being so, and he may then rest assured, that we have quite as many. (8) Indeed I must add more; for if we were to boast of having received an authority beyond that of an ordinary Minister of the Gospel: (which authority the Lord has given for the edificaton, and not the destruction of the church) I should not be saying anything of which I need to be ashamed, for it would be nothing more than the truth. (9) But that it may not be said, I terrify you only by my letters, (10) (for I know it has been said, his letters are bold and powerful, but when he comes he is weak, and his speech contemptible,) (11) let me assure you that what we appear to be by our words in our letters, that you shall most certainly find us to be by our actions when we come. (12) But we do not wish to mix ourselves up, or to compare ourselves with, some among you, whose custom it is to praise themselves, but who in measuring themselves by a standard of their own, and merely comparing themselves with one another, are not wise. (13) Neither will we boast of having authority any where beyond the limits assigned to us, but according to that

commission which has been given us of God, we have preached the Gospel through many countries, even until we reached you at Corinth. (14) For we do not stretch our power beyond due measure, as some seem to think, who would wish to prove that our authority does not extend to you, for in our travel we reached you, and conveyed to you the knowledge of the Gospel of Christ. (15) Therefore, we are not claiming any thing more than we have a right to, in considering you as our converts, and subject to our authority, we are not boasting of other men's labours; and we hope, moreover, when we shall have seen your faith increased, that we shall be encouraged by our success among you to go on further, according to our custom, (16) and preach the Gospel to the countries which lie beyond you, not wishing to take credit to ourselves for what others have done. (17) But after all, let us not glory in anything which we may do, but let us glory only in the Lord. (18) For we are not to be estimated according to what we say of ourselves, but according as we are approved of by God.

APPLICATION.

That all dissensions, public and private, arise from men seeking to commend themselves, and not to glorify God.

If all kept in mind the Apostle's rule, "He that glorieth, let him glory in the Lord," we should

not find the church of Christ divided into sects and parties in the way it is.

Were all seeking the glory of God with sincerity of purpose, and singleness of heart, unity and love would reign, where now alas, we find bitterness and strife. For people generally stand up for their own opinions, more because they are their own, than because of the importance they are of in regard to the honour and glory of God. It is to be feared that of many dissenters in these days, it must be said, as it was of some among the Corinthians, they "are not wise"; they are self-seekers; they take a standard of their own; they seek their own convenience; they study only their own private interests, and not the glory of God. They doubtless commend themselves, that is to say, they think they are doing right, but that is not enough: "For not he that commendeth himself is approved, but whom the Lord commendeth."

We may observe further, that it is seeking the honour of self, and not the glory of God, which causes all the quarrelling that arises in private families, as well as in the church of Christ.

In any family, where each member endeavours to promote the glory of God, what peace and comfort dwell! There is no clashing of interests, because all are working for the same end; the whole move together upon one principle. But alas, we much more frequently find, even among professing Christians, that each one is for himself, each is seeking his own advantage, each endeavouring to establish his own credit; and disputing and backbiting follow of course to the dishonour of His name, whom they

profess to serve. They may perhaps consult what will be for the glory of God, when any great thing is to be determined, but they altogether overlook it in the common affairs of daily life, in regard to their conduct one with another. The fact is this, we all have faults of temper, and infirmities of character, which makes us to be trials to one another, and under these circumstances the general practice is for each one to commend himself. Each one is anxious to make out a good case for himself, and to throw the blame upon some one else. Whereas the only way in which these constant trials can be properly met, is by keeping continually in mind the christian principle of denying self, and seeking the glory of God in every thing.

Reader, what course are you following? Are you seeking on all occasions to commend yourself, or is it your only glory that God is glorified by your conduct both public and private? At least can you say, that to seek the glory of God is the principle, upon which you act in all things, great or small? Stop, till you have answered the question to yourself. If conscience replies, that in little things you act on no principle at all, as far as you know of, then, be assured your's is the principle of self-seeking.

PRAYER.

O merciful and gracious God, I beseech Thee to perfect in me the spirit of lowliness. Take from me that pride of heart which resents an injury. Teach me to copy the example of St. Paul, and

o follow him, as he followed Christ, in meekness and gentleness. O Lord, mercifully grant me such spiritual weapons, as by Thy power and might may be effectual to the pulling down of every strong hold of Satan in my heart. Grant that every evil imagination may be resisted; that every high feeling which exalts itself against Thee, may be brought low; that every thought may be brought into captivity and made obedient to the law of Christ. Lord, teach me not to look on things after the outward appearance. Suffer me not to think in myself that I am Christ's, unless I have just grounds for doing so. Let me not measure myself by the standard of man's opinion, or be satisfied with comparing myself with others. Preserve me from a boastful, self-commending spirit. In true humility and lowliness of heart, grant that I may seek not my own praise, but Thy glory. In all my conduct towards my fellow-creatures, teach me to deny myself, to study the happiness of others, and so to behave that Thou mayest be glorified by me, and that I may be approved of by Him, for Jesus Christ's sake. Amen.

CHAPTER XI.

EXPLANATION.

Verse 1 to 6. Notwithstanding what St. Paul had said in the last chapter against self-commendation, he felt it necessary according to the circumstances in which he was placed, to justify himself; and therefore says, (1) I would to God you would listen patiently to what I am going to say: it may seem folly; but still I hope you will bear with me, while I explain myself to you. (2) The truth is, I am very anxious about you; I watch over your interests with a jealous eye. For in having led you to accept the Gospel covenant, I may be said to have espoused you to Christ, and I am most desirous to see that you be presented to Him as a chaste virgin. (3) But I am fearful lest, as Eve was beguiled by the subtilty of Satan, so you by means of false teachers should be led away from simplicity of faith in Christ. (4) If any one were to come to you, and preach another and better Saviour than we have preached, or if he were to offer you greater spiritual gifts than you have already received, or any better Gospel than you have already accepted, then indeed you might well bear with his pretensions to superiority. But this cannot be. (5) For I suppose I may truly say, in no respect am I a whit behind the very chiefest of the Apostles. (6) For if my language

be plain and unpolished, I am nevertheless not deficient in spiritual knowledge; and this must surely have been made fully plain to you all, while I was with you.

APPLICATION.

A question for self-examination, 'Am I espoused to Christ.'

Every faithful Minister of the Gospel will, like St. Paul, watch over the souls committed to his care with godly jealousy. Diligently and carefully will he lay before his people the saving truths of the Gospel in all their simplicity, and enforce them with every argument likely to affect the human mind; but if we were permitted to hear even the very chiefest Apostle, even St. Paul himself, preach, it would profit us nothing, unless the truth were received into our hearts in the power thereof. Each one must therefore watch over his own soul with a godly jealousy, or pastoral care and outward privileges will be unavailing.

Let us now remark on the striking language of St. Paul, wherein he speaks of his converts as being espoused to Christ. What are we to gather from these remarkable words? Surely they teach us this truth, that our undivided affection must be given to Christ, to Him who gave Himself for us. The union between Christ and the Church is represented in Scripture by the marriage union, as we find in the fifth chap. of Ephesians, and also in the book of

Revelation, where the Church is called "the Bride the Lamb's wife." (xxi. 9.) Now if a husband expects to reign without a rival in the heart of his wife, and to find her willing, if needs be, to forsake all the world beside for his sake, can we suppose that Christ will expect less; can we suppose He will be satisfied with an affection less entire in those whom He receives as His bride? Impossible. We cannot flatter ourselves for a moment that a divided heart will be accepted by Him, any more than by an earthly husband. If therefore we are not depending wholly upon Him for salvation, but are trusting in any measure to a fancied righteousness of our own; or if we are giving our love to the world and not to Him, we must never expect to be blessed among those, who are called to the marriage supper of the Lamb. (See Rev. xix. 9.)

On this point, therefore, let us be jealous over ourselves with a godly jealousy. Let us observe too our peculiar danger, in order that we may be on our guard. Eve was beguiled through the subtilty of the devil, and this same subtile enemy is at work now, endeavouring to corrupt our minds, and to lead us away "from the simplicity that is in Christ;" that is to say, from a simple and entire dependance upon, and love to, the Saviour. This is what Satan is aiming at. His object is, if possible, by any means to turn away men's minds from looking simply to Christ as ruined sinners to the only Saviour. This he often effects by so taking up their attention with curious speculations about religion, or the outward forms connected with it, as to cause its practical truths to be overlooked; or he will lead men to be

satisfied with themselves, and to think because they do not give themselves up altogether to the love of the world and the ways of sin, that therefore all is well. He will deceive whom he can; therefore let us be on our guard against so subtile an enemy. Let us try ourselves by the standard which St. Paul has here given. Let us examine most closely into the state of our heart and affections, and judge sincerely whether our zeal and love towards the Lord that bought us, can be properly compared to that entire devotedness and warmth of affection, which we know is felt by those, who, being espoused to each other, are united together by the strongest bonds of earthly love. Our whole heart, our first and best affections, must be given to God, if we hope to be received as part of that Church which is the bride of Christ.

EXPLANATION.

Verse 7 to 15. St. Paul proceeds to make observations upon the objections, which his enemies had brought against him. (7) Have I, he says, committed any offence, because I have humbled myself that you might be exalted; that is to say, I have preached to you free of expence that Gospel by which you may be exalted to eternal glory. And in order to do this freely, without being burdensome to you, I have myself stooped to work at a trade; but still, not being able to maintain myself, (8) I may be said to have robbed other churches for your sakes, for I received wages from them while I was

labouring among you. (9) When I was living at Corinth, and was in want, I was not chargeable to any of you, but my wants were supplied by the brethren which came from Macedonia; so that I have never hitherto been a burden to you, and never will be. (10) So surely as the truth of Christ is in me, no one shall ever deprive me of this cause of boasting regarding my conduct in the Province of Achaia. (11) And why is it that I thus persist in taking nothing from you? Is it because I do not love you? No. God knows it to be far otherwise. (12) But what I have done, that I will continue to do; and for this reason, that I may cut off all excuse from those who wish for an excuse, for making themselves burdensome to you. So that whereas they boast of being as much Apostles as we are, they may have also to boast of being as disinterested as we are. (13) But in fact, these men are not what they appear to be; they are false Apostles; they work deceitfully, hiding their real character under the pretence of being Apostles of Christ. (14) And no wonder that wicked men can do this; for even Satan himself can make himself appear like an Angel of light. (15) And therefore it is no great thing, if the ministers of the devil should pretend to be ministers of righteousness. But their end will be according to their works.

APPLICATION.

A Christian will sooner sacrifice his rights, than lose an opportunity of glorifying God.

The character of St. Paul, as it is held forth to us in Scripture, may benefit us as much as his precepts, if we study it for imitation. It is impossible not to admire the self-denying disinterestedness, with which the Apostle acted upon the occasion under consideration. He readily sacrificed his own just rights, in order to expose the hypocrisy of the false teachers, and relieve his friends from their dangerous and corrupting influence. They were wolves in sheep's clothing, who had got among the Corinthians; men who wished to make a gain of godliness; they preached for what they could get, but had no real love for Christ, or the souls of men. In order to put them to the proof, St. Paul refused to accept any return at all for his labours, calling upon the other teachers to follow his example, well knowing that none but faithful Ministers would be able to stand this test. From this we may learn to consider, not what is simply right in itself, but what under all the circumstances of the case will be most for the glory of God, and the good of men. St. Paul had a right no doubt to look for support at the hands of the Corinthians, as all Ministers may properly expect to be maintained by those for whom they labour; but with a Christian, there are many things much more dear to him than

his rights. The interests of his soul, and the souls of others, are dearer to him far; and what is dearest of all, is God's glory.

Now it was much to be desired for the good of the Corinthian church, as well as for the glory of God, that the false apostles and ministers of Satan should no longer be received as Apostles of Christ, and ministers of righteousness, and no selfish considerations could deter the real and true Apostle from exposing these hypocrites to view. Oh, that we were all more like minded with him!

And if we would be so, we must carefully mark the principle of our actions, and sift our motives to the bottom; for in regard to mere outward conduct we see that it is possible for those who are doing Satan's work, by corrupting the truths of God, and making divisions in His church, all the while to be making fair show in the world just as the devil himself to serve his own purpose, may make himself appear an Angel of light. But God who looks at the heart knows who they are that labour for themselves, and who for His glory; and however men may be deceived, the end of each will be according to the real nature of their works.

EXPLANATION.

Verse 16 to 23. Having plainly stated the character of the false apostles, the true Apostle proceeds to speak of himself. (16) I say again, let me not be thought a fool for justifying my conduct, which has been so misrepresented.

But whether you will consider me a fool or not, I wish you still to hear what I have got to say, that I may explain to you my just grounds of boasting. (17) I am aware that in saying what I do, I may appear to act contrary to that principle of humility which our Lord requires, and that you may think I act foolishly in thus confidently boasting. (18) Still seeing that others have so gloried in their fancied rights and outward advantages, I feel it to be my absolute duty to glory also. (19) And I expect you to bear with me, as I find in other instances you can so gladly put up with fools, seeing that, wise as you are, (20) you have suffered them to rule over you. You can submit, even if they bring you into bondage, if they devour your substance, exalt themselves over you, and even treat you in the most insulting manner. (21) I speak now concerning the reproach, which is cast upon us, namely, that we are weak. And be it known that in whatsoever respect any of your teachers are bold to bring forward their pretensions, (though it may seem foolish,) I will be bold to do so likewise. (22) If they boast of being Hebrews by nation, so can I. If they have the religious privileges of Israelites, so have I. If they are descendants of Abraham, so am I. (23) Do they boast of being Ministers of Christ, (however foolish it may sound,) I must say, I have a much greater right to do so. My labours have been more abundant, and my sufferings from stripes, imprisonment, and perils of death, much greater.

APPLICATION.

That we should watch against allowing self to be the subject
of our conversation.

We must here remark with what reluctance St. Paul is constrained to speak of himself; he expresses again and again his opinion that self-commendation is a folly. But though unpleasant, and generally unprofitable, he thought it in his case a duty, from which with propriety he could not shrink; notwithstanding that he saw the probability of his conduct being misrepresented. Hence we learn, that to speak in our own behalf is for the most part inconsistent with the humility and self-abasement of the Christian character. Nevertheless this is not a rule wholly without exceptions, but one which ought never to be departed from but with reluctance, and under the conviction that the cause of Christ requires it. But still how far are most men from feeling this reluctance to advance any thing in their own behalf. On the contrary, how generally is the subject of self-commendation to them most agreeable. It is not, as in the case of St. Paul, duty which constrains, but inclination which leads men to make themselves the prominent persons every tale they tell. The conscience of the wicked man will surely be sure to acknowledge this to be true. He will feel himself justly convicted of self-willings, and if not willing to run this, a proof of his wickedness will probably be found in the very next

conversation he enters into. Now let us remember that the great object of religion is to bring down the idol self, and set up God in the heart; and then let us consider, how much pleasure we find in bringing forward self in our conversation, and we cannot but perceive that religion is very far from having that influence upon our conduct and feelings which it ought to have. This thought must surely humble us, and ought to excite us to greater watchfulness.

When therefore, we are conscious of seeking to gratify self-love by talking about ourselves, let us check the rising desire, and when we are aware of having indulged this appetite for praise, let us humble ourselves under a sense of sin, and watch carefully against repeating the same fault. For which end it would be well to guard against the too frequent use of those little words, I and my, me and mine. And this we must do, if we would act up to the Scriptural rule "Look not every man on his own things, but every man also on the things of others." (Phil. ii. 4.)

EXPLANATION.

Verse 24 to 33. St. Paul in giving an account of his many sufferings, begins by saying, (24) Of the Jews I received five times over forty stripes, save one. The reason of this peculiar number is explained by this circumstance; according to the law of Moses, (see Deut. xxv. 3.) the Jews were not allowed to beat their prisoners with more than forty stripes at one time, and as it was their custom to use a whip

with three cords, they could only give thirteen strokes which made thirty-nine stripes without infringing this law. (25) Three times I was beaten with rods. A punishment used by the Romans. Once I was stoned. Three times I was shipwrecked, and on one occasion I remained for twenty-four hours in the sea floating on a part of the wreck. (26) In short I have been constantly journeying, and every where meeting with dangers whether by sea or land; whether in my own country, or among the heathen; whether in the crowded city, or in the barren wilderness; and many of my difficulties and dangers have arisen from pretended brethren who have proved themselves false. (27) My life is past in weariness and painfulness, often having no rest by night; suffering also from hunger, thirst, cold, and nakedness. (28) And besides other things, I am overwhelmed with the business which every day crowds upon me, and the anxiety which arises from having the care of all the churches. (29) Every individual claims my attention. Who is there that is weak in faith, with whom I do not sympathize? Who is there that falls into an offence, for whom I do not burn with zeal to reclaim him? (30) Thus then since I have been compelled to boast, my glorying shall be of those things which I have been called upon to suffer. (31) And the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which is blessed for ever, knows that all I have said is true. And one more event in my history I must mention. (32) When I was in the city of Damascus, the Governor acting under King Aretas, placed a guard at every gate of the city with an intention of making me prisoner; (33) but through the window of a house

built on the wall, I was let down in a basket, and so escaped his hands. (See Acts ix. 23.)

APPLICATION.

No affliction to be regarded as a token of God's displeasure.

It is no uncommon thing for a heavily afflicted Christian to think, that there must be something peculiarly bad in himself to make the correcting rod so constantly necessary. Few perhaps among the afflicted children of God, but have at times been harassed with such thoughts. When one disappointment comes after another, and one sorrow follows after another throughout a long course of years, the enemy of our souls is sure to be busy in making it appear a very peculiar case, and will try to persuade the troubled mind to think it must be in wrath, and not in love, that God permits such evils to fall upon one devoted head. In anguish of spirit the afflicted Christian will sometimes cry out, Oh, what have I done? wherein have I offended the God whom I desire to serve, so as thus to draw down His wrath upon me? It might be supposed enough, if the sufferer were reminded that it is written, "Whom the Lord loveth He chasteneth." (Heb. xii. 6.) "As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten." (Rev. iii. 19.) But the mind which is slow to receive comfort, may perhaps consider these texts as applicable to those who are in some measure afflicted, but not to one dealt

with so severely. Then let the mourner, whose troubles seem of such an aggravated nature, consider the passage of Scripture now before us, in order to be convinced that sufferings should not be considered as the proof of God's displeasure. Who will say that their trials are more numerous, heavier, or more continued than St. Paul's? And yet were these sufferings dealt to him in anger or in love? We find that the very subject of his boasting was the being counted worthy to suffer. Nothing is more certainly a temptation from the devil, than the idea that affliction is a proof of God's displeasure. We know that God is angry with the wicked every day, and not less so when in prosperity than in adversity. We know also that "The Lord loveth the righteous," and that not less in adversity than in prosperity. Whether therefore we be the objects of God's anger, or of His love, is a question not to be answered by referring to our outward condition.

The truth is, we are all too apt to forget, that the present is not a state of rewards and punishment, but one of trial. We should do well to consider this more frequently, and not allow the mind to attach, to prosperity the idea of God's blessing, nor to adversity the idea of God's displeasure. The consequence of doing so must be a want of tenderness towards those who are afflicted, and an undue depression when we ourselves are in affliction. This false notion that God's favour towards us is proved by His making our outward circumstances to prosper, is so deeply rooted in most minds, that it requires the greatest effort to eradicate it. It will therefore be most useful to meditate on the accounts we meet with in Scripture, of the

afflictions visited upon God's most faithful servants. No one after reading the close of this chapter can venture to say, that any degree of distress and trouble proves the displeasure of God. On the contrary, those who are under the gracious teaching of God in the school of affliction, have cause to glory in their infirmities; since they are the marks of a Father's love. "If ye endure chastening, God dealeth with you as with sons." (Heb. xii. 7.) Instead therefore of listening to the voice of the tempter, and yielding to feelings of despair, let the afflicted Christian count it all joy to fall into divers temptations; (See James i. 2.) because, "Happy is the man whom God correcteth." (Job v. 17.)

PRAYER.

Gracious and merciful Father, I earnestly beseech Thee to teach me to be jealous over myself with a godly jealousy. Help me to search into the state of my heart, and to know on whom my chief affections are placed. Preserve me from self-deception in this great matter. O Lord, it is my humble and earnest prayer to be a faithful member of that church, which Christ hath espoused to Himself; that so in that day, when I am presented before Thee, I may be numbered with the blessed, who are called to the marriage supper of the Lamb. Make me ready at all times to deny myself, when I can thereby honour Thee, or benefit my fellow creatures. Preserve me from being misled by false and deceitful men. Preserve me from being deceitful and *false myself*. Since Satan can transform himself

into an angel of light; make me most carefully to watch against an outward profession of religion without sincerity of heart. Grant that throughout the trials and troubles of this mortal life, I may acknowledge Thy hand as chastening ever in love. Enable me patiently to endure under all the weariness and painfulness which may come upon me, whether of mind or body. And for Thy merciful corrections teach me ever to praise and glorify Thee, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who art blessed for evermore. Amen.

CHAPTER XII.

EXPLANATION.

VERSE 1 to 6. Once more St. Paul expresses his sentiments respecting boasting; he says, (1) Doubtless it is not a desirable thing to glory; nevertheless I think it right for me to go on and tell you of the wonderful visions of divine things, and special revelations, with which the Lord has favoured me. St. Paul then from feelings doubtless of modesty goes on to tell of what had happened to himself as though he were speaking of some other person. (2) I knew a sincere believer in Christ fourteen years ago, whether he were in the body, or out of the body, I cannot tell; God only knows; but he was caught up to the third heaven. (3) And

I know that this man, either in or out of the body, was (4) caught up into paradise, and heard such wonderful things as it is not possible for a man to repeat. (5) Of a man thus honoured I might certainly glory; still as regards myself, I will glory only in my infirmities. (6) But certainly if I were to wish to glory, I might after this do so without being called a fool, as I only speak the truth. But I will forbear saying anything further on the subject of visions, as I do not wish any one to think more highly of me than he may be induced to do by what he sees me to be, and hears me to speak.

APPLICATION.

Our duty is to act up to God's word, and not to desire to know more than is revealed.

The visions of glory with which St. Paul was favoured, were such as God has not seen fit to bestow in ordinary cases. St. Paul's circumstances were peculiar; and to him peculiar light and knowledge were for special reasons vouchsafed. If at any time we are tempted to wish that veil withdrawn which hides the future world from our eyes, we should reflect upon the nature of our present constitution, and consider that this life is intended by God as a state of trial, which trial consists in our being required to walk by faith, and not by sight; therefore the glories of heaven, and the horrors of hell are alike hidden from our view. But if we

can trust God's word, and believe the truth of His promises on the one hand, and of His threatenings on the other, we need nothing more to make heaven the object of our longing desires, and hell of our utmost dread. Moreover, men do not continue in sin from want of more proof of the reality of a state of rewards and punishments. No. "If they hear not Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded, though one rose from the dead?" (Luke xvi. 31) that is to say, those who are not influenced by the truths of Scripture would not be changed, even though visions of another world were granted to them. It is not the understanding which needs to be convinced, but the heart which requires to be converted.

The language of paradise, even if here it could be spoken, would not be music to the ears of those in whose hearts the love of sin yet reigns. Let us not then indulge in vain desires after further light and knowledge, beyond what is revealed, but seek to improve by that which we possess in the word of truth. Let us labour after that holiness without which, we know, that no one can enter the paradise of God, or would be happy there if he could. And in order to excite in our minds as much as possible a desire after heaven, it may be well to reflect how St. Paul here represents its glories as so surpassing every thing we have ever seen, heard, or thought of, that no language whatever can express it.

If with our present power we were capable of understanding the nature of heavenly happiness, it would not be so supremely glorious as it is. Ima-

gination may picture what it pleases, and all that our highest expectations can conceive will still fall short of the truth. Thus our brightest hopes and fondest desires, when fixed on heavenly things, are sure not to be disappointed; for the reality will surpass them all. This is a thought in which we shall do well to indulge, for it is highly calculated to inflame our minds with spiritual desires and holy longings after that glorious hour, when like St. Paul we shall be caught up together to meet the Lord in the air; and that not as a passing vision, but to be for ever with the Lord. (See 1 Thess. iv. 17.)

EXPLANATION.

Verse 7 to 10. Having mentioned the peculiar favours with which he had been honoured, St. Paul now proceeds to tell of the discipline which in consequence was found necessary for him. (7) Lest I should be puffed up, he says, with pride on account of the many extraordinary revelations I have been favoured with, it pleased God to appoint that I should have trouble in the flesh; by means of which affliction Satan has buffeted me severely, but it was permitted in order to prevent my being lifted up with pride. (8) Three times I prayed that the Lord would remove this affliction from me; (9) but the answer I received was, My grace is sufficient to support you under it; and my strength appears in its perfection, when working with the weakest instruments. Therefore now I gladly rejoice in my infirmities, *that the power of Christ in me may be*

made manifest. (10) Therefore I take pleasure in my own infirmities, and in the reproaches I receive from others; in the wants I experience, and in the persecutions and distresses which I endure in the cause of Christ: for when I am most weak in myself, then by Him I am made strong.

APPLICATION.

On the power of religion to transform the bitterest sorrow into a cause for joy.

There is no evil principle in the heart of fallen man more to be dreaded than pride. It is our deadliest enemy. Even the great Apostle St. Paul was in danger from it; how thankful therefore ought we to be for any discipline, however painful, which helps to mortify in us this fatal passion: a passion, which if not destroyed in us now, will cause us to be destroyed both body and soul in hell.

Humiliating afflictions, though brought to us by the unfriendly hand of Satan, should yet be regarded as gracious messengers from the God of love; because intended to effect the important purpose of purifying our hearts from pride. They may be sharp and painful, as thorns and briers tearing the flesh, and yet we have cause to be thankful for them, if they teach us to walk humbly with our God. The more closely any affliction cuts at the root of pride, the more severely it pricks; but then also the more profitable it is, supposing it be rightly

received. Satan may take his advantage when he is thus permitted to harass us, and for a time may seem to triumph; but we must never forget that our enemy is a conquered enemy. However sharp the thorn may be with which he buffets us, we may take courage when we remember that the Captain of our salvation, who was once crowned with thorns, then suffered Satan to do his worst, and vanquished him for us. And it remains for us to believe the assurance, that we also shall be made more than conquerors through Him that loved us; knowing that "he that believeth on Him shall not be confounded." (1 Pet. ii. 6.) Nature however will feel, and desire relief; and we learn, not only from the example of St. Paul, but from our Lord Himself, that to pray for deliverance is lawful for us. Not once only, but twice, and even thrice our Saviour prayed, and said, "If it be possible, let this cup pass from me;" and St. Paul thrice besought the Lord, that the thorn in his flesh, the trouble whatever it was, which distressed him, might depart from him.

If it be not the will of God to grant us our petition, still we know that He hears our prayers, and answers them according to the spirit, if not to the letter of our request. If he do not remove the thorn that wounds us, it is because its continuance will prove a greater blessing than its removal; and He will reply to us, as He did to St. Paul, "My grace is sufficient for thee." He will make His own glory shine out, and His grace triumph through means of our weakness. Thus, when humility and faith are exercised in us, and God is glorified by us,

then we shall learn, like St. Paul, most gladly to rejoice in our infirmities, and even to take pleasure in those things which to flesh and blood are most painful and to the feelings of the natural man, most dreadful. How strange it must sound to the unconverted mind to hear any one say, that they take pleasure in being reproached and persecuted, that they glory in their infirmities, and in being exposed to necessities and distresses ! Yet this was the language of St. Paul, and will be the language of those who know what it is to have the power of Christ resting upon them, of all who have ever experienced the blessedness of feeling Christ's strength made perfect in their weakness. Surely if such be the effects of religion, we must acknowledge that her ways are ways of pleasantness, and all her paths are peace ; a peace which truly passeth all understanding to those, who only have heard of it without the hearing of the ear, and have not themselves tasted it.

Reader, have you learnt the language of St. Paul ? Has the power of Christ so rested on you as to turn your weakness into strength, and to enable you to say, "when I am weak, then am I strong ?"

Few, very few, are without some thorn in the flesh. Almost always there is something or other, either in our outward condition, or the frame of our inward feelings, to mar the happiness which else we might enjoy. This is the messenger of Satan to buffet us. The question to ask is, Have we, according to the example of St. Paul, learnt so to receive it, that with truth it may be said to be transformed, as it were, into an angel of light ?

EXPLANATION.

Verse 11 to 21. Now, St. Paul says, granting that I am become a fool in thus speaking to my own glory, the fault is yours; you have obliged me to do so by not having upheld me as you ought to have done; for I am certain that, as an Apostle, I am in no respect inferior to the very chiefest, though in myself I am nothing. (12) For truly the signs of my being an Apostle were sufficiently plain, when I was among you, by the patient perseverance with which I fulfilled the duties of my office, by the spiritual gifts I displayed, and by the miracles I was enabled to perform. (13) And what have you to complain of? Wherein are you worse off than other churches? Except indeed it be that I have put you to no expense in maintaining me. If this be an injury, then forgive it me. (14) Now for the third time I am about to come to you; and still I will be no burden to you; I seek not your money, but your benefit. I love to look upon you as my children whom I have begotten in the Lord, and it is not expected that children should lay up for their parents, but parents for the children. (15) Most willingly will I spend both my substance and my strength in your service; even though it might seem that the more abundantly I love you, the less you love me. (16) But perhaps it may be said by some that I have been very cunning, and that though I did not burden you openly, yet that I did it in an underhand way by means of others. (17) But did

any one whom I sent make a gain of you? (18) I desired Titus to visit you, and with him that other brother, whom I sent. Did Titus make a gain of you? Did he not act in the same spirit as myself? Did he not tread in my steps? (19) Again, do you think we are seeking merely to defend our own character? As speaking in the presence of God we do declare that in all things, dearly beloved, we are seeking your edification. My anxiety is great concerning you; (20) for I fear when I come, I shall not find you all I would wish you to be, so that I shall be obliged to act towards you in a manner you will not like. I am afraid I shall find among you quarrels, envyings, and strife. In fact I fear (21) lest, when I come again, it may be the will of God to humble me among you, and that I shall have to mourn over many, who have grievously sinned, and have not repented of the wickedness they have committed.

APPLICATION.

The duty of defending an injured character.

Let it here be observed, that merely to refrain from finding fault is not enough; we are worthy of blame, if we do not commend, where commendation is due. St. Paul was obliged to speak for himself, when those whose duty it was to have spoken for him held their peace. If they who knew very well the proofs of his Apostleship, had defended him

from the slanders with which he was attacked, his own defence would have been unnecessary; he was driven to that self-commendation which he so much disliked, by the silence of those who ought to have come forward in his behalf. We cannot but feel indignant at conduct so ungrateful. We wonder how the Corinthians could thus have requited the devoted Minister, who was spending and being spent altogether in their service.

But now let us look at home. Are we ever guilty, in a like manner, of suffering others to be unfairly run down, without interfering to rescue their character from suspicion, perhaps disgrace? Many people seem to think that, if they do not join in the abuse, if they stand aloof, and take no part in speaking evil of their neighbours, they have done enough. But no; be it remarked that, if we could say any thing in defence of those who are attacked, and withhold our testimony, we fall into the sin here reproved by St. Paul; we force the injured person to the necessity of self-defence, or leave him to labour under an unjust reproach, and thus break the ninth commandment in the spirit though not in the letter of it.

The duty of taking an interest in the spiritual welfare of others.

Verse 14. St. Paul says, "I seek not yours, but you." How unlike is such language as this to any thing we meet with generally in the world! How commonly do we see that all which people care

about in regard to their neighbours, is to get as much out of them as they can; the rich seeking to get as much work from the poor, and the poor as much money from the rich as is possible; and neither of them caring any thing more about each other. Their whole thoughts are occupied about themselves, and about the things of this perishing world.

Oh, how is eternity lost sight of by such selfish creatures! And they who are thus without love for their neighbours, are equally destitute of wisdom for themselves, as it is certain that all who have a care for their own souls, will also feel anxious about the souls of their neighbours. The welfare of the whole world was nothing to St. Paul, in comparison with the salvation of one soul. And if we felt as we ought to do, no personal worldly interest would be half so important in our eyes as the spiritual prosperity of those around us. When this is the case, the rich by their instructions and the poor by their prayers, are helpers together of each other in their road to heaven. When these feelings exist, where love is mutual, and where the kindness of one party is returned by the gratitude of the other, all is easy and delightful. But the case is very different, when our labours of love, and our anxiety for the spiritual welfare of others, is received, as is too often the case, with dislike and contempt. This is a trial which the passage before us will teach us how to meet. The example of St. Paul is what we must endeavour to imitate. He loved those who did not love him. He continued labouring on for those who

returned evil for good. And the more he did to prove his affection for them, the less they liked him in return. Now Reader, consider how far you are treading in his steps. Think of those who are least kind to you. Perhaps some of your neighbours, or it may be your relations, are unkind and ungrateful; you may have laboured hard for their good, and get nothing in return but ill will. How do you behave to such? What are your feelings towards them? If it be plain enough that the more you love them, the less you are loved, yet can you go on loving them still? Are you still willing to spend and be spent for them; because you seek not their gratitude, but their soul's good? Difficult it is, most assuredly, to attain to such a state of mind; but by the grace of God it is possible; and no one can be a true follower of Christ who is not striving after it. But many who fancy themselves very good Christians, are not at all inclined to allow that such forbearance and such perseverance in love is necessary. They think it is expecting too much. But whoever can persuade himself to rest satisfied in any thing short of what St. Paul here holds forth to our imitation, must remember that he takes not the Bible for his guide. He is judging for himself, and not listening to that word of God, by which we must all in the end be judged.

On preparing for Christ's coming.

Verse 20. The object of St. Paul in writing this letter was to prevent, if possible, the necessity of exercising his authority in punishing the Corinthians who had rebelled against him. But still he greatly feared that his coming would be attended with shame to many, and with distress to himself. Now in like manner, we ought to consider the whole Bible, as it were, a letter from God. It is a written statement of God's will towards us. Here we learn what we have to hope, and what to fear, in that day when He shall appear in person to judge the world. We are fully warned and instructed concerning the awful consequences of continuing in rebellion against Him. But notwithstanding this, when He shall come in His glorious majesty, there will be many it is to be feared on whom He will take vengeance, because they have not listened to the Bible, and therefore have known Him not, nor obeyed the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ. It is to be feared that in the day of His coming, He will not find men in general what He would have them to be, and that He will be found by many what they little expect. Then indeed there will be wailing and gnashing of teeth among those who have sinned, and have not repented. Those, for instance, who have given way to the sins of the flesh, and indulged themselves in fornication and uncleanness, thinking but lightly of it, and still hoping to be pardoned without repentance, and to

and all well in the end, how surprised and horror-struck they will be to find themselves numbered with those workers of iniquity, on whom he comes to take vengeance. Then they will experience the truth of that which is written "no whoremonger, nor unclean person, nor covetous man, who is an idolater, hath any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and of God." (Eph. v. 5.) Let us then take heed now, and listen to the warning voice, that we may be able to rejoice, and not to bewail, in the day of Christ's appearing.

PRAYER.

O merciful Father, who hast graciously been pleased to give us a revelation of Thy will so far as is needful for us, grant that I may receive it thankfully, study it diligently, and learn duly to profit by it. Teach me to meditate for my good on the glories of the unseen world, so that my desires may be more earnest after that happiness which is unspeakable. Grant that I may so live to Thee by faith in Christ, that I may hereafter be caught up to dwell with Thee in life everlasting. Give me a just sense of the evil of sin, and make me patiently, and thankfully, to endure any trouble in the flesh, by which the pride and naughtiness of my heart may be corrected and subdued. Enable me fully to believe at all times that Thy grace is sufficient for me. O teach me earnestly to seek for it, and entirely to depend upon it. Grant that in the midst of my infirmities and distresses, I may feel the power of Christ resting upon me, and thus be enabled

rejoice in those things which are painful to flesh and blood. Teach me to feel that when I am most weak in myself, I am still strong in Thee. Impress upon my mind the duty of defending the character of those who are unjustly condemned. Make me careful not only to avoid speaking evil of any one, but to be ready also to speak to the praise of those who deserve it. Teach me to seek more to do good to others, than to get gain from them. Make me ready to spend and be spent even for those, who the more I love them, the less return my love. In all I say and do, make me careful so to behave, as that I may edify others. Preserve me from all idolatry, envying, wrath, and strife. Teach me deeply to bewail my sins, and grant that since all have sinned, all may repent, especially those who have been guilty of fornication and uncleanness; lest in the awful day of Thy appearing, we be found such as Thou wouldest not have us to be, and that Thou be found unto us a Judge taking vengeance of our sins. Oh, mercifully grant that all may now turn from their evil ways, and find pardon and peace through the precious blood of Jesus Christ, our most blessed Lord and Saviour. Amen.

CHAPTER XIII.

EXPLANATION.

VERSE 1 to 6. In this last chapter St. Paul again declares his determination of bringing his enemies to an account, and severely dealing with those, who by rejecting his authority were fighting against God. He says, (1) This is the third time that I am coming to Corinth, and it is my intention that every thing shall be inquired into, and proved upon the authority of sufficient witnesses. (2) I have told you before, and forewarn you again, as plainly as if I were with you; for though still absent, I write to inform those who formerly were offenders, and have not mended, and all others sinning in like manner, that when I come, I will not spare. A display of my power you certainly shall have, (3) since you are wishing for a proof that Christ does speak by me. Though the evidence of this, as regards yourselves, has not been weak; but on the contrary, very strong. (4) For as Christ, though He appeared in great weakness, when He was crucified, does now live by the power of God; so we also, though we may appear now to you to be weak in Him, yet you shall see that we do live with Him by the power which God shall enable us to exercise toward you. (5) A proof of our divine commission may be found in your own conversion; therefore examine yourselves, and see whe-

into him, and make our abode with him." (John xiv.)

3. But many alas, who call themselves Christians, and profess a firm faith in the truth of their religion, have no such evidence as this of the reality of their faith. And be it observed, unless we understand what it is to have Christ dwelling in us, and making His abode with us, we are reprobates. Like a false coin we are fit only to be thrown away, or like withered branches of the vine fit only to be cast to the fire; we have in short no part nor lot in that religion which we pretend to believe. Merely to believe the truth of Christianity will avail us nothing; the devils also believe, and tremble. If religion is to do us any good, it must be by its transforming and renewing power, namely by its power to change our nature. We want proofs of its truth not in our heads, but in our hearts. We want an evidence not only of the truth of Christianity generally, but of its application to ourselves individually. Therefore let us follow the advice here given, "Examine yourselves whether ye be in the faith; prove your own selves." Self-examination is a most important duty, but one alas, sadly neglected to the eternal ruin of many immortal souls. It is put off from day to day, and the question is never seriously asked, am I in the faith of Christ? until death approaches; then pain and weakness render every exertion impossible, and the thoughtless spirit must appear before God without ever having answered this inquiry. Oh Reader, beware how you neglect the duty of self-examination. If you think you are in the faith, then inquire what are the proofs of it? They must be looked for in your

ner of life and conversation. To them that rightly receive the religion of Jesus, He gives the power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on His name. (See John i. 12.) Are you then, by the power of God bestowed upon you, enabled to live a life becoming a child of God? Do you know yourself that Jesus Christ is in you? that is to say, do you find in yourself a strength to resist sin, and a power to become holy, which you know by nature you do not possess? Is there something of the same character in you now, which there was in Christ when upon earth, and are you going on to acquire more and more of that character?

These are the sort of questions we ought to put to ourselves frequently, to know whether we be indeed in the faith, or whether we be reprobates. But there are many who would shudder at the idea of being reprobates, who yet can find no proof that Jesus Christ is in them. It may therefore well to observe there is nothing between the unbeliever and the believer. The unbeliever is damned, and he that believeth not shall be damned. (See Mark xvi. 16.)

EXPLANATION.

VERSE 7 to 14. So far was St. Paul from wishing to show his power by the punishment of his enemies, that he says, (7) My prayer to God is, that you may be kept from that evil which would make it necessary for me to exercise that power. My prayer is not that I may give proof of the power which I possess, but that I may find you behaving

onest, upright manner; this is what I wish, even though in consequence I should continue to be accounted by some as a reprobate. (8) But the fact is, whatever you may think, we are so guided by the spirit of truth that we can do nothing contrary to the truth. (9) Instead of wishing to prove our power by punishing offenders, we are willing to seem weak while you are proving yourselves strong in faith and good works. All we desire is your perfection in holiness. (10) And I write thus while I am yet absent from you, because I do not wish to exercise against you that power which I have received from the Lord, for your benefit, to increase, and not to destroy your happiness. (11) Finally, brethren, farewell. Strive to amend and be perfect, live in comfort together, by being of one mind, and at peace one with another; and then the God of love and peace will be with you. (12) Kiss one another with a holy kiss. (13) All the saints here send messages of love. (14) Now may the favour of the Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the blessed presence of the Holy Ghost, be with you all. Amen.

APPLICATION.

The prevalence of self-love, a reason for humiliation, and for fresh endeavours after perfection.

The very strong regard and affection which St. Paul felt towards the Corinthians, is plainly manifested throughout the whole of his letters;

of all other love. The concern we feel for
arises, not so much from any pure regard
welfare, as to our own, in connection with the

Here, however, we find a man, whose fi
was less dear to him than the prosperity of the
of Christ: one who was willing that his own
tion should suffer, rather than that another
sin; willing to be considered even a re
sooner than find in another's misconduct an
tunity for defending himself. Now, this tr
Christ-like spirit. This does indeed remind
Him who, though He knew no sin, was made
us; that we might be made the righteousness
in Him. (See 2 Cor. v. 21.)

Let us but consider how the Lord of heav
earth was willing, for our sakes, to be despis
rejected of men, and to bear in His own b
the tree, the punishment which our sins de
and we must surely wonder to think how slow
to bear one for another. What anxiety ther
each one to clear himself from blame, cost
may to another. Reader, does not conscienc

conduct and feelings in this respect, are tried by the Christian standard. Alas, do we not see and feel how little there is in us of the mind of Christ in this respect! Whatever may have been done in turning our hearts from the love of sin to the love of holiness; however we may be satisfied that the service of Satan has been exchanged for the service of God, till we can hardly fail to perceive that there is yet much to be done in turning our hearts from the love of self, to the pure love of God, and of mankind for God's sake. To a man of the world it appears absurd to talk of disinterested affection. He will say there is no such thing. But the Christian acknowledges that there is; and in the example of St. Paul, we see not only a proof to this effect, but an inducement also to labour after the same, knowing that his labour shall not be in vain in the Lord.

Every view we take of our own deficiencies should be the subject of humiliation, but not of despair. The standard at which we aim, is perfection: there is nothing short of this set before us in Scripture. This is our wish, says St. Paul, even your perfection, and his closing admonition is, "Be perfect;" and the same also is spoken to us who believe these epistles to be the word of God, and not of man, and who receive them as the declaration of His will to the church unto the end of time. Let us not then rest at ease, or be satisfied, while we are conscious of feelings contrary to that mind which was in Christ.

Let us not think self-love innocent, because so common; but let us mourn and grieve at the remnant of corruption, while we labour and strive with con-

stancy and earnestness to be perfect, even as our Father which is in heaven is perfect. The task is difficult; still we must not forget what rich and large supplies of help and strength are offered to us. We may possess, if rightly sought for, nothing short of the grace of Christ, the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Spirit. If thus the Triune God be for us, we may well exclaim, who, or what can be against us?

In spite then of all difficulties and discouragements, let us "press toward the mark, for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus." (Phil. iii. 14.)

PRAYER.

O merciful Lord God, suffer me not to continue in ignorance and unconcern about the state of my soul. Make me carefully to examine myself, and frequently to inquire whether I am really in the faith of Christ, seeking to prove myself His true disciple by a holy life and conduct. Grant that I may indeed know that Jesus Christ is in me, by the purifying and sanctifying influence of his grace, making me a new creature. I pray Thee, O God, so to guide and keep me, that I may do no evil. Work in my heart, I beseech Thee, a self-denying spirit, and a disinterested love towards my fellow-creatures. Preserve me from being over anxious to be approved of by men. Give me patience to endure, if wrongfully accused, and deprived of power to clear myself.

O Lord, my earnest desire and prayer is, that I may be perfect. Assist me to live at peace with

my neighbours. And O, Thou God of love and
ace, be pleased to dwell among us, and may the
ace of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God,
d the communion of the Holy Ghost, be with us
, evermore. Amen.



THE

PISTLE TO THE GALATIANS.



THE
EPISTLE TO THE GALATIANS.

CHAPTER I.

EXPLANATION.

VERSE 1 to 5. In the province of Galatia, St. Paul had preached the Gospel with much success. But enemies to him and to the truth soon arose, who here, as at Corinth, endeavoured to lessen his influence by representing, that he had not received his commission expressly from God, as the other Apostles. By this means they prejudiced the minds of men, not only against him, but also against the doctrines which he had preached; and they succeeded in introducing the false and fatal notion, that the keeping of the Mosaic law is necessary to salvation. It was in consequence of these false teachers having corrupted the churches in Galatia, that St. Paul wrote this letter, in which we find him fully and plainly declaring the doctrine, that justification is through faith in Christ alone, and that any dependance upon the works of the law would render the death of Christ of none effect. But in the first place, it was necessary

show, that what he wrote came with authority; therefore he begins his letter by declaring the nature of his commission in this manner. I, who write this epistle am Paul the Apostle, having received my Apostleship, not from man, but from God, even by the instrumentality of man, but from Christ, and from God the Father, who raised me from the dead; (2) I, together with all the brethren now with me, address the churches of Galatia, wishing you grace and peace from God the Father and from our Lord Jesus Christ, (4) who gave Himself as a sacrifice to atone for our sins, in order to deliver us from the corruption and iniquity of this present evil world, according to the will of God: (5) to whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen.

APPLICATION.

subject, may be perceived by the fact, that even in his salutation to the Galatians, he cannot name the name of Christ without showing what was uppermost in his thoughts, for he adds, "Who gave Himself for our sins." On these few words hang all our hopes of eternal life. As sinners we have lost the favour of God. The wages of sin is death, eternal death; and as the sentence has gone forth, not a single child of Adam can escape the awful doom, but through the means of that perfect and sufficient sacrifice and atonement for the sins of the whole world, which has been made upon the cross by Jesus Christ. As in Adam all die, so through Christ alone can any one be made alive. Now this is very well known by the great enemy of man.

The atonement made for us by Christ, in so far as we avail ourselves of it, defeats the devil's plans. His victory, which seemed complete, when Adam fell, was lost to him, when Jesus died. But still he is not without hope; because as formerly Eve believed him, instead of God, so now men are continually found willing to believe the father of lies, sooner than the God of all truth. His object now is, of course, by any means to draw us away from Christ. If he can succeed in diverting us with the things of the world, that will do; but if he fail in this respect, then he endeavours to turn our minds from the right way, and suggests to us, that something besides the cross of Christ is necessary as the means of salvation.

From the earliest times to the present hour, this has been his aim; and alas, he has been but too successful. It is therefore most needful to

well where our danger lies; for the poison often presents itself to us in a most flattering form, and under pretences most cunningly devised to deceive, and to mislead. We have need also to arm ourselves against it by a prayerful study of the Scriptures, that we may obtain a right knowledge of the way of salvation therein revealed. And as this epistle to the Galatians was written on purpose to resist the efforts, made in the times of the Apostle, to undermine the doctrine of justification by faith in Christ alone, it is peculiarly fitted to strengthen us against the attacks of the enemy on this point. It is often said respecting this doctrine that it encourages men to continue in sin; but that this is false, may be proved by considering the fourth verse, where the way of salvation is stated, and the effects of it plainly declared. We are told not only that Christ gave Himself for our sins, but also the object He had in view in so doing. It was that He might deliver us from this present evil world. He died, not merely that we might obtain pardon, but that we might be delivered from the dominion of sin and Satan. The devil is the god of this world; and therefore to be delivered from the world, is only another way of expressing, being delivered from the power of Satan. Reader, beware how you deceive yourself with any vain hope of salvation, while you are walking in the ways of the world. If you are satisfied to do as others do, and are following the multitude to do evil, you know nothing yet of the way of salvation, though you may be ever so clever in talking about it. Without holiness no man shall see the Lord. (See Heb. xii.

14.) "If any man be in Christ, he is a new creature." (2 Cor. v. 17.) "They that are Christ's have crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts." (Gal. v. 24.) By such texts as these we must try ourselves, if we would have satisfactory proof that we have profited by the death of Christ. In this way it must appear that we are delivered from this present evil world. Whenever therefore we hear it said, that to proclaim salvation through faith is to give licence to sin, we may know for a certainty from whence this falsehood springs. It is one of the ten thousand ways, by which the father of lies would hope to turn us away from depending upon Christ, in whom only there is salvation; "for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved." (Acts iv. 12.)

EXPLANATION.

Verse 6 to 12. St Paul now enters upon the main subject of his letter with expressions of regret and astonishment. He says, (6) I am surprised, that you should so soon have turned away from the truth, which I preached among you, when I called you unto the grace of God by Jesus Christ; and that you should be now holding doctrines so contrary to what I taught, that you seem to have found quite another Gospel. (7) But in fact it is no Gospel at all; but altogether a delusion, introduced by those who would trouble you, and turn you away from the true doctrine of the Gospel of Christ. (8) But if any one among us the Apostles, or if even

that in regard to what I would persuade
believe, I am influenced by men, or God?
seek the favour of men? If I do, then I
the servant of Christ. (11) But I assure yo
thren, that the Gospel which was preached
was not of human invention. (12) For I
receive it from man, neither was I taught it b
but I received it by special revelation from
Christ.

APPLICATION.

The duty of carefully inquiring what the Gospel

We may observe here, that the word Gospel
signifies good news, is applicable only to the t
of salvation. There is but one way of sal
therefore there can be but one Gospel. For
it may sound like good news to be told of a

may perhaps prove too late. It were better never to have been born, than to pass through life in ignorance of the one only true way of salvation. We may rest assured, that they are our worst enemies, who would persuade us that any thing but the Gospel of Christ, as it is revealed to us in Scripture, will avail to save our souls. There are many very amiable and delightful people, who hold opinions very different from those of the Bible, and we may be inclined to think, that such excellent people (as to us they seem to be) cannot fail to be going to heaven. But our business is not to reason, but to listen to the Bible. Those who choose to think for themselves, instead of being willing to learn the truth from the Scriptures, are sure to go wrong. But if we study the word of God with simplicity of mind, and sincerity of heart, we must be convinced that there is one, and but one way, by which men can be saved; and that even if an angel from heaven were to tell us of another, we ought not to believe him. Those who preach any thing contrary to the truth as it is in Jesus, be they ever so good or wise according to our notions, are, according to the language of Scripture, accursed. After reading such a solemn declaration as this, may we not well tremble at the thought of deceiving others, or being deceived ourselves, upon the important question, what is the true Gospel? Reader, do you think you understand, what the Gospel means? For it is not that very light and easy matter fully to understand, which so many seem to think it to be. Have you ever taken any pains and trouble to come at a knowledge of the truth? Have you ever felt any anxiety about it? If not, consider your danger; you

may perhaps be taking that for the Gospel, which is not the Gospel, and where you look for a blessing, you may find a curse. You are not so easy and unconcerned about things which affect your present happiness. It is very remarkable, and very grievous, to observe how differently the generality of mankind feel and act with regard to their interests in this world, to what they do with regard to their interest in the next. A poor man, when he knows he must quit his cottage and be thrown out of work, is full of anxiety how next to provide for himself and his family; and he does not rest till he has found another home, and other means of subsistence. Or again, if one in the higher ranks of life wishes to obtain some desirable situation, he makes it his business most carefully to inquire with whom the appointment rests, and to whom he must apply to make interest for obtaining it; also what is required on his part to fit him for the situation. All these are points, in which we see he is deeply interested by the pains he takes to get accurate information. But is it thus that men act in regard to religious matters? Alas, no. It often seems as though people were not only quite satisfied, but almost rejoiced in their ignorance. So far from making anxious inquiries respecting the way of salvation, or asking, as we must suppose every rational being would, "What must I do to be saved?" they really seem to fancy, that because they know nothing, nothing can be required of them. The folly of this would appear plain enough, if applied to temporal things. Suppose a man, when he has notice to quit his cottage, should say, "I am sure I do not know of any house to be had, and therefore no one can

expect me to find one." Should we not say of such an one, that he was mad. But is it not equal folly, if a man thinks to himself, "I was neglected in my youth, my parents gave me no schooling, and my Minister takes no pains to teach me any thing, so how am I likely to know any thing of religion?" just as if to save his own soul were no concern of his whatever. And yet this is the sort of way, in which hundreds quiet their minds; they rest satisfied in their ignorance, saying perhaps, it may do very well for our betters, who have nothing else to do, to study their Bibles, but we have no time. Oh, how different will all this appear, when they shall lift up their eyes in hell being in torment. Then they will see religion was their own concern, and ought to have been their chief concern, and they will wonder how they could ever have thought otherwise. Ignorance then will seem no excuse.

Oh, that I had but enquired the way to heaven! will then be their cry; oh, that I had but been as careful to provide for my soul as for my body! What would poverty have been in comparison to this hell? I might have known better: I might have learnt from those who would have taught me how to escape this place of torment.

Let us thus endeavour to fancy how we shall think respecting things, when the time comes that we shall be either in heaven or hell. And let it be well observed: it is not the want of learning which makes people ignorant of the way of salvation, but it is being indifferent to the subject. Hundreds who could never read have found the way, and hundreds who had every knowledge but the right, have *missed it*.

EXPLANATION.

Verse 13 to 24. St. Paul had stated that his knowledge of the Gospel had come to him by direct revelation from God, and not through any human channel. This he now goes on to prove by giving a short account of his life; and he begins by saying, (13) You have doubtless heard what was my character in times past, when I was a Jew, how I persecuted beyond measure the church of God, and laid it waste. (14) And that I was more knowing in the Jewish religion than any of my equals among my own nation, being more zealous than any of them, for the traditions handed down to us by our fathers. (15) But when it pleased God, who from my birth had always intended me for a Minister of the Gospel, and who called me to it by His grace, I say when it pleased Him (16) to give me a knowledge of His Son, that I might preach Him among the Gentiles, I held no consultation with any man, no not even with myself, but followed as I was led by the Spirit. (17) I did not go up to Jerusalem, to them who were Apostles before me: but I went into Arabia, where there could be none to teach me. (18) And then after three years I went up to Jerusalem to see Peter, and was with him a fortnight, (19) but I saw none of the other Apostles, excepting James, the relation of our Lord. (20) Now for the truth of what I write I appeal to God, who knoweth that I lie not. (21) After this short stay at Jerusalem, I went into Syria and Cilicia, and preached there. All this time I was

personally unknown to the Christians of Judea. (23)
But they knew thus much, that he who formerly had
been a persecutor, was now a preacher of that very
religion, which once he laboured to destroy. (24)
And they gave glory to God on my account.

APPLICATION.

In telling our experience of God's grace, much caution is
necessary.

St. Paul had two reasons for giving this account of himself. In the first place, he wished to prove what he had before stated, that he had received the doctrines, which he taught, directly from God. He shows that the change which took place in him, from being a persecutor to a preacher of the Gospel, was so sudden and violent, that nothing less than a miraculous operation of the Spirit could have effected it. He states also, that he had no opportunity for many years after his conversion, of learning any thing by human teaching. Thus he would convince the Galatians, that they might place perfect confidence in him as their spiritual guide, having received his commission from God, not merely in an ordinary manner, but moreover by an extraordinary revelation; and this was a most important matter to establish. In the next place, he relates his history in order that the wonderful grace of God manifested towards him, might be known and acknowledged to the praise and glory of God. With these two objects

in view, St. Paul did well to speak of himself. But as a general rule, the subject of self in our writing and conversation ought to be avoided. We are all far too ready to make ourselves the hero of our own tale; but the evil of doing so consists, not in the thing itself, but in the vanity and self-love from whence it springs. If our motive in speaking of self be either the wish of comforting others by a reference to our own experience, or of glorifying God by making known the riches of His grace towards us, then it is better to speak, than to hold our tongue. At all times the Christian must carefully watch the motives which guide him; but especially when talking of self. In the history of St. Paul's conversion, we have a wonderful instance of the power of divine grace; but though this was effected in a manner altogether miraculous, yet to each individual brought under the teaching of God's Spirit, no conversion will appear more astonishing than his own, for the heart of each one only knoweth the bitterness of the sin that troubles it. Of none other than ourselves can we know all the evil, with which the grace of God has to contend, and it is most desirable for ourselves, and it may sometimes be useful to others, that we should trace out the way by which a long-suffering God has converted a rebellious sinner into a devoted servant of the Lord Jesus Christ. Of all the evidence for the truth of our religion, there is none so powerful as this internal evidence of experience. When the Jews who opposed the religion of Jesus, wished to convince the man born blind, to whom He had given sight, that He was a sinner, he cared not to answer *them* in that matter; it was enough for him to say,

One thing I know, whereas I was blind, now I see." In like manner, when a man once dead in trespasses and sins, has experienced the power of religion to change his heart, and create him anew in Christ Jesus unto good works, he needs no other answer than this to all the doubts and cavils of the unbeliever, "I was dead, and am alive again; I was lost, and am found." This internal evidence, or experience of the power of true religion, is an all-sufficient evidence to the believer's own mind, far superior to any thing which reason and philosophy can advance; and it is oftentimes very strengthening to the faith, and encouraging to the hopes of others, that these things should be spoken of; but it must always be with great caution, lest we be found honouring ourselves instead of God, instead of simply speaking "to the praise of the glory of His grace, wherein He hath made us accepted in the beloved." (Eph. i. 6.) In speaking of what God has done for us, our only object ought to be to effect that, which we see was effected in St. Paul's case, when he tells us, "They glorified God in me."

PRAYER.

O God, my heavenly Father, Thou who didst raise from the dead our Lord Jesus Christ, mercifully grant me for His sake, grace and peace. O blessed Jesus, Thou who according to the will of God the Father, didst give Thyself for our sins, grant that through faith in Thee, I may be effectually delivered from the power of this present evil world. To Thee be glory for ever and ever. O

Lord God, who hast mercifully called me into the grace of Christ, grant that I may never be removed away from the hope of the Gospel. Grant that I may rightly know what is the Gospel, that I may receive the truth in sincerity, and firmly hold it in all simplicity and humility. Enable me to resist all the wiles of the devil, who would willingly persuade me to believe in something, which is not the Gospel. Gracious God, I beseech Thee to keep me from the company of all such as pervert the Gospel of Christ, who would trouble my peace now, and might prove the troublers of my peace for ever, by leading me astray, and causing me to be accursed with them. Oh, may I never seek to please men, by following them in any way contrary to Thy will. Grant that I may be truly and indeed the servant of Christ. Make me ready and joyful at all times to tell of that goodness and mercy which have followed me, even from my mother's womb ; but preserve me from vanity and self-seeking in so doing. Grant that with all humility, I may ever acknowledge that I owe every thing to grace alone. Do Thou, who hast mercifully called me by Thy grace, be pleased to reveal Thy Son in me more and more, that I may experience in myself the power of true religion, and be able to testify to its truth before others by my altered life ; so that they may indeed glorify Thee, O God, in me ; to whom, with the Son and Holy Ghost, be all honour and glory, for ever and ever. Amen.

CHAPTER II.

EXPLANATION.

VERSE 1 to 10. St. Paul here goes on relating his own history: (1) Fourteen years after my conversion, I went up again to Jerusalem with Barnabas, taking Titus also with me. (2) And I went in consequence of receiving from God an especial direction so to do. I then explained the nature of that Gospel which I had been preaching to the Gentiles. This explanation I made not publicly, but in a private manner to those of the highest reputation in the Church. And I did this with a view to prevent any misunderstanding that might by possibility hinder my usefulness, and render my exertions vain. (3) But so far were the rest of the Apostles from disapproving of my principles, that they did not even insist that Titus who was with me should be circumcised, though he was a Greek, and would therefore have needed to be circumcised, if they had thought circumcision necessary. But they did not. But I went up to Jerusalem* to lay the matter before them, (4) on account of those false brethren, who had crept in amongst us, and who were endeavouring to deprive us of the liberty which we have in Christ Jesus, and to bring us again into Jewish bondage. (5) To

* See the fifteenth chapter of Acts.

whom we would not be in subjection, no, not an hour, being most anxious that the true Gospel should remain among you in all its purity. (6) This in regard to those of high reputation in the church, such as the Apostles, though they might seem to my superiors from having seen Christ upon earth and being Christians of a longer standing, yet this was nothing to me; it did not make me in any wise subject to them; for God accepts no man on account of any external advantages, so that in fact however much they might seem to be my superiors, my intercourse with them added nothing to my previous knowledge. (7) So far from teaching any thing, they were convinced that God had appointed me to be the chief Apostle to preach the Gospel to the Gentiles, as He had appointed Peter to be to the Jews. For it was evident, that He who had so effectually fitted Peter to be the Apostle to the Jews, had also worked mightily by me in converting the Gentiles. (8) So when James, Cephas, and John, who were the very pillars of the church, that is to say, the men who were its greatest ornament, and chief support, when they saw how much grace of God was given to me, they offered to us and Barnabas their right hands in token of receiving us as their fellow Apostles; and they agreed that we should go and preach to the heathen, and they should preach to the Jews. (9) Only I proposed, that we should be mindful of the poor Christians in Judea, to which I most readily agreed.

APPLICATION.

That we should examine ourselves, whether we are seeking the approbation of men, or the glory of God.

It is no uncommon thing to find people apparently anxious to do good, who the moment that any objection is made to their mode of proceeding, either disdainfully resent the interference, or pettishly throw up their work in disgust. Where such is the case, can we suppose the conduct to be influenced by a pure love to God, and our fellow creatures? And on any other principle, what are all apparent good works, but means which the devil employs, to quiet men's consciences in the absence of true religion? Let us now observe the conduct of St. Paul, where humility of heart, and sincerity of purpose, so strikingly mark the man of God. He evidently had one, and but one object constantly in view, and that was to glorify God by the saving of immortal souls; and in pursuing this course, we find that his only anxiety was, lest by any means he should run, or had run, in vain. It was not human praise that he cared for, but success to the cause which he had in hand. He feared lest by any imprudence on his part, or any misunderstanding on the part of others, his usefulness might be hindered. Therefore, when he found that his authority as a Christian Minister was doubted, instead of being offended at the idea, he applied himself carefully to

remove the prejudice raised against him; he went up to Jerusalem, and there explained his doctrines, and proved his commission to the satisfaction of those, whom he considered best able to judge in the case, having had authority given them by Christ to govern and direct in the affairs of the church. He steered clear of the two extremes, into which men are so apt to fall, neither yielding timidly to human opinions, when they are contrary to God's truth, nor yet being indifferent to them, when entitled to carry weight as coming from those who had the same divine authority as himself. He valued too much the approbation of those, whom he calls pillars of the church, not to name with pleasure the fact, that James, Cephas, and John, gave to him the right hand of fellowship; for this was important to him, not as regarded his honour, but his usefulness. Oh, that men would but examine themselves more closely, and consider what they are really aiming at! Self in some shape or other is so often at the bottom of actions, which appear at first sight to spring from a far better source.

In considering the conduct of St. Paul on this occasion, we may observe further, that many things are either right or wrong according to circumstances. Thus we find that St. Paul considered it most important that Titus should not be circumcised, though he thought it desirable in the case of Timothy. (See Acts xvi.) Now those who judge of people's actions without knowing their motives, would of course condemn this as most inconsistent conduct; but when we know, and consider the circumstances of the case, the propriety of his so acting is plain enough.

us beware of judging rashly of others, and careful consider well the circumstances by which our own conduct must be guided. In the case of Timothy, circumcision was desirable, as a means of removing a prejudice against him, which might have prevented Jews from listening to him. But had Titus yielded his respect to the wishes of those false brethren, taught the necessity of the Jewish ceremonies as means of salvation, a fatal error would have been committed. In his thus acting therefore, according to the circumstances, we have another proof that a single principle guided the conduct of St. Paul; he was more careful to act right, than to appear consistent in the eyes of men. We may learn moreover from this, that while it is our duty to avoid giving unnecessary offence, and right to yield to the prejudices of others, if harmless, it is yet necessary to stand firm, when we are required to do anything, by which the ignorant may possibly be misled to their eternal ruin. An action which is in itself innocent, under some circumstances even desirable, becomes evil, if likely to be misunderstood to the injury of an immortal soul: so important is it that we study the probable effect of our conduct upon the minds of others.

EXPLANATION.

verse 11 to 14. Further to prove his ministerial integrity, St. Paul tells us that (11) he took himself to find fault even with St. Peter, who was together at Antioch, because he

blamed. (12) For before the arrival of a certain number of men zealous for the Jewish ceremonies, who came from Jerusalem, where St. James the Apostle and Bishop, St. Peter had eaten with the Gentiles, it was a proof that he considered the Jewish law done away; but as soon as they were come, he altered his conduct, and withdrew from the society of the Gentiles, fearing what might be thought by these Jewish Christians. (13) And others also who were Jews by birth, did the same. And even Barnabas was led away by bad example, that he also fell into the same sin of hiding his real opinions. (14) Therefore St. Paul saw that they did not walk rightly, but contrary to the true spirit of the Gospel; he said to Peter openly, before them all, if you, who are a Jew do sometimes live after the manner of the Gentiles, that is to say, neglecting the ceremonies of the Jewish religion, why do you now so behave, as to make the Gentiles think, that you consider Jewish ceremonies necessary?

APPLICATION.

On dissimulation in religion.

To dissemble our real opinions on a religious subject, so as to mislead others in a matter of such importance, must be a fearful sin. Even the Apostle St. Peter, when guilty of dissimulation, was openly reproved. The circumstance is doubtless here mentioned by St. Paul as an evidence of his

ority in the church, since so far from having
 at his religion from the other Apostles, he took
 on himself to withstand to the face one of the very
 best among them, because he was to be blamed;
 it is also recorded as a lesson to all succeeding

Let us take it to ourselves.

There is nothing more ensnaring than the fear of

It acts in a thousand ways to draw us aside
 that upright path, in which we ought to walk.

One of the many evils to be dreaded from a too
 anxious desire to please our fellow men is the dis-
 solving our real opinions on religious subjects.

Usually to say we think one thing, when we really
 think another, is not the sin in question; this would
 be an untruth which every conscience would con-
 demn.

But it is the withholding our sentiments from
 fear of ridicule, or the dread of blame. And

is this, but loving the approbation of men more
 than the favour of God? And what a fearful sin is

For what is man, whose breath is in his nos-
 e, and wherein is he to be accounted of? What

any mortal do for us in our greatest extremity?

Who can support us in a dying hour? Who can stand

for us, and plead for us, in the great judgment day?

What will the friendship of the world avail in that
 important moment?

Now, let us but consider the folly and madness of

any man, who the utmost he can do, can but kill

his body, and not fearing God, who can and will

destroy both body and soul in hell, if we prefer any
 thing to Him.

In matters of religion the opinions of men must

not be our rule. In regard both to doctrine and

practice we must simply inquire, Lord, what wilt Thou have me to do, and to think? What is right in Thy sight? How may I best honour Thee, promote Thy glory, and further Thy kingdom upon earth? A certain degree of religious profession is in these days very popular, and is necessary to obtain for us respect among men. But if we go a little beyond the mark of what is commonly practised, and carry out the holy principles of religion into every action of our lives, we must expect to be condemned as enthusiasts. And this being the case, the temptation is often very great to dissemble a little respecting what we really think and feel, in order to accommodate ourselves the better to the opinions of others.

With regard to St. Peter, his conduct had reference, not so much to religious practice, as to religious doctrine; he so acted as to make it appear as though he did not know, "that a man is not justified by the works of the law, but by the faith of Jesus Christ." (Ver. 16.) He dissembled his real opinions respecting this one all-important doctrine of our religion, that we are "justified by the faith of Christ, and not by the works of the law." This was his sin; and let it be a warning to us. There are many very amiable, moral, and agreeable people, whose good opinion we might very naturally wish to secure, to whom the doctrine of the Cross will give offence. We find them ready enough to join us in praising the goodness of God in His providence, and they will delight to talk of heaven as the future home of sufferers upon earth; but if the name of Jesus be mentioned, the only name under heaven by which we can

be saved, we see directly the subject is unpleasant. To those who are ignorant of the real nature of sin, and therefore well satisfied with themselves, the value of a Saviour is unknown; and they will not thank any one for reminding them that by the works of the law no flesh can be justified, but that if saved at all, it must be "by the faith of Jesus Christ." All this is to them most unsavoury doctrine, and that it is so may be discovered, either by the silence which succeeds upon any allusion to it, or it may be, by a look of displeasure which too often will silence the tongue that ought faithfully and boldly to declare Jesus Christ, and Him crucified, as the sinner's only hope. This is what we must do, if we wish to walk uprightly according to the truth of the Gospel, unshaken by fear, and uninfluenced by the opinions of men.

EXPLANATION.

Verse 15 to 21. St. Paul had just related to the Galatians, that he had found fault with St. Peter for allowing his sentiments on the important doctrine of justification by faith to appear doubtful. Whether these verses are a continuation of his speech on that occasion, or only some further comment upon the subject, is not clear; neither is it of any consequence; the sense is the same. He observes, (15) We who have been born Jews, and have not sinned to the extent of the Gentile world, (16) being aware that no man can be counted free from guilt in the sight of God by the works of the law, but only by

to Christ for justification, we are still to be sinners unless we keep the whole law, Christ done for us? Is Christ then the minister of sin and condemnation, instead of being the minister of pardon and justification? God forbid; yet this is what it comes to according to what I am arguing against. (18) For if I am told that I have hitherto been doing by my preaching to teach the necessity of my keeping the law as a means of justification, I make out myself condemned as a transgressor of the law, being justified as a believer in Christ. If I keep the law in order to be justified, I must despair; (19) for the very strictness of the law, and the perfection which it requires, has caused me to feel dead to the law; that is to say, the carnal nature of the law has made me feel hopeless of being saved by it, and I have thus been led to the Gospel, which does enable me to live. (20) I am now so united with Christ as to feel with Him the effects both of His death and of His death upon the Cross has answered.

live, is maintained in me by the constant exercise of faith in the Son of God, who loved me so as to give Himself to die for me. (21) Thus then you see it is not my plan, whatever others may do, to frustrate the grace of God; that is to say, to render inavailing that scheme of salvation revealed in the Gospel. For if we could have been saved by the keeping of the law, then the death of Christ was unnecessary.

APPLICATION.

How we cannot, and how we can, be justified before God.

There is no subject more awfully important, none which ought to be so deeply interesting to the human mind as the one now before us, namely, the subject of man's justification before God. Yet, strange to say, we often hear people arguing upon it with as much cool indifference as though they were talking of some learned question, which whether it were settled one way or another, would not in the slightest degree affect their happiness and welfare. The word justification too often sounds upon the ears, and slips from the tongue, without conveying to the mind in any measure the mighty consequences which hang upon it. To be justified is to be acquitted of the charge brought against us. A man arrested for some crime, and going to be tried for it at the next assizes, understands very well what is meant by being acquitted, or condemned. And if we were to visit him in his cell, we should not find him discus-

the chances of his escape from punishment with the same insensibility that so many exhibit in their discussions upon justification. It would almost seem as though the word itself changed its meaning, when applied not to an earthly, but a heavenly court of justice. As if being justified, or not justified, did not involve the same serious consequences, when we are to be tried before God, as in the case of a criminal who is to be tried by the laws of the land. But it is in fact precisely the same thing. In either case, to be justified is to be acquitted of the charge of guilt. Surely then it is no light matter. If there be one portion of Scripture more than another entitled to our deeply serious consideration, with prayer for guidance to understand it, it is the one before us, since it describes how a man can, and how he cannot, stand guiltless in the sight of God. The charge brought against us is that we are guilty of sin, that we have failed to keep the commandments of God. Can this charge in any case be denied? Can it be proved of any man that he has lived wholly without sin, having done all he ought to have done, and never having left undone the things which ought to have been done? Can the man be found who is bold enough to stand before God upon such a charge, and plead "Not guilty?" But whatever men may say or think upon the subject now, it will certainly be found in the great judgment day, as it is here written, that "by the works of the law shall no flesh be justified." If we stand on our defence upon the ground of our own deserts, condemnation alone can follow.

But this is not a truth as generally believed as we

might expect. Even when allowed in words, it is often denied in point of fact; this we conclude, because we see many not at all unhappy, who yet are trusting to nothing for acceptance with God but their own general good conduct; we must therefore suppose that they have a secret hope that they shall not be condemned, though they can give no rational reason, certainly no scriptural reason, for their hope. There is, however, a way by which, though really guilty, we still may be acquitted of guilt: and the Gospel reveals it to us. The Gospel makes known to us a Saviour, One who was wounded for our transgressions, and bruised for our iniquities; who bore the chastisement of our sins, and by whose stripes we are healed. The Lord hath laid on Him the iniquity of us all. (See Isa. liii. 5, 6.) He has laid it on Him, and He was willing to bear it. He bore our sins in His own body on the tree. God "hath made Him to be sin for us, who knew no sin, that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him." (2 Cor. v. 21.) Christ was counted as a sinner, that is, He was treated as a sinner for us, in order that we might be counted as righteous, and treated as such by God. And this explains to us, how it is that "a man is not justified by the works of the law, but by the faith of Jesus Christ." If in the great judgment day it can be proved, by a reference to our past lives, that we were true believers in Jesus Christ, it will then be found that we are justified by the faith of Christ, and the sentence, "Not guilty," will be passed upon us. Thus then we see that faith in Christ is the only thing that can save us. And surely the first thing,

therefore, to be done is to inquire, Have I faith? To answer this question, we must examine ourselves to know if there be in us those fruits of faith, which we find to have been in St. Paul. He says, I, through the law, am dead to the law, that I might live unto God. When he had done with the law as a means of salvation, he had not done with it as a rule of conduct, he was not careless about the fulfilling of it, or he could not have said, he lived to God. The law is the expression of God's will; and by living to God we must understand, that he endeavoured in every thought, word, and action, to please Him. And he was enabled to do so much, beyond his natural strength; for being crucified with Christ, which means that he was a partaker in the benefits of Christ's death, he partook also of the benefits of His life. Christ now liveth to make intercession for His people; thus St. Paul was not only pardoned for his sins past, but enabled, by the grace bestowed upon him through Christ, to lead a new and holy life. Now, are these the effects of faith in us? Can we say, that the life we now live is quite different to what it would have been by nature, that it is maintained by the constant exercise of faith in the Son of God, who loved us, and gave Himself for us? Alas, many people have no idea what such language means: the truth is, they have not faith in Christ. They have never been alarmed by any sense of danger; they are not aware of their need of a Saviour, and consequently are uninfluenced by the power of His love; they are looking to themselves and not to Him, and by this means they frustrate the grace of God. All the love and mercy of God in the plan of sal-

vation becomes to them of no avail. Reader, if you are not living to God by means of Christ's living in you, rest assured you have not yet attained to that faith in Him, without which you cannot be justified. The sentence of guilt and condemnation hangs over you while in such a state; and remember, unless this sentence be reversed in this world, the consequence must be most dreadful, even eternal misery in the world to come.

PRAYER.

O Lord God, who hast been graciously pleased by revelation to communicate to Thy servants the Gospel of truth, grant that I may ever be most careful neither to misunderstand it myself, nor mislead others concerning it. Make me fearful lest I should run, or had run in vain. O merciful God, preserve me from the unholy influence of false brethren. Grant that the truth of the Gospel may continue among us in all its purity. Give me courage and boldness to confess it faithfully before all men. Suffer me not through fear of shame or reproof to act contrary to my conscience, or to hide what I know to be right. Help me by Thy grace to walk uprightly at all times, and under all circumstances, according to the truth of the Gospel. Grant, Lord, that all from the least to the greatest may know, that man is not justified by the works of the law, but by the faith of Jesus Christ, and grant that I may so believe in Him, that I may be justified by the faith of Christ. Oh God, forbid that I should seek to justify myself by my works. Make me deeply sensible of

my manifold sins, aware that I am continually leaving undone the things I ought to do, and doing the things I ought not, and thus, that if judged by the law I am dead; but grant that in Christ I may live, and that I may richly share in all the glorious benefits both of His life and death: grant that the life I now live in the flesh, I may live by the faith of Thy Son, O God who loved me and gave Himself for me. Suffer me not to make Thy grace, O God, of none effect, but thankfully to accept the righteousness which is by faith in Jesus Christ, that I may through His death obtain pardon, peace, and eternal life: To whom with Thee, and the Holy Ghost, be all honour and glory, now and for evermore. Amen.

CHAPTER III.

EXPLANATION.

VERSE 1 to 5. St. Paul having clearly proved his authority as a Minister of Christ's Gospel, now proceeds to use that authority, in correcting the Galatians for the error into which they had allowed themselves to be led, by the teaching of false brethren. The object of that teaching was, as we have seen, to draw men's minds away from the efficacy of the atonement made by Christ upon the cross for our sins, by teaching them to attach undue importance to their own religious performances. Thus leading them from the rock, and inducing them to

vation becomes to them of no avail. Reader, if you are not living to God by means of Christ's living in you, rest assured you have not yet attained to that faith in Him, without which you cannot be justified. The sentence of guilt and condemnation hangs over you while in such a state; and remember, unless this sentence be reversed in this world, the consequence must be most dreadful, even eternal misery in the world to come.

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yet make little or no progress in their Christian course. They feel it themselves, and it is obvious to others. Instead of seeing them full of joy at the glorious prospect opened to them through the Gospel, we find them dispirited and gloomy, neither able to enjoy the present life, nor to look beyond it without dismay. We may well ask, how is this? Should not religion do more for us than make us hate sin, and tremble for the consequences of it? Yes, certainly. The proper fruits of religion are "righteousness and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost." (Rom. xiv. 17.) When therefore we look around us, and thus see professing Christians so very different in many respects from what the Bible would lead us to expect, we naturally inquire the reason. There may of course be various reasons, but perhaps none more common than that which proved so fatal in the case of the Galatians. And their error was this: having begun in the Spirit, they hoped to be made perfect in the flesh. So it is with many in our day. They are ready enough to acknowledge that faith in the efficacy of Christ's death is the way of salvation, and that the Holy Spirit is the agent, by whom an effectual faith is wrought in our souls; but they do not maintain a conduct consistent with these views. Christ is with them the author, but not the finisher of their faith. They trust to the Spirit's work to begin, but to their own efforts to perfect the work of sanctification. We find it written in the Word of God, "by grace are ye saved through faith" (Eph. ii. 8.) By grace, that is to say, by the free unmerited mercy of God, we are saved; but there is necessary on our parts that we believe this mer-

now live, is maintained in me by the constant exercise of faith in the Son of God, who loved me so as to give Himself to die for me. (21) Thus then you see it is not my plan, whatever others may do, to frustrate the grace of God; that is to say, to render unavailing that scheme of salvation revealed in the Gospel. For if we could have been saved by the keeping of the law, then the death of Christ was unnecessary.

APPLICATION.

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and power of Him, through whom alone we can ever obtain a victory over the devil, the world, and the flesh. And this faith in the power of God, so far from deadening our efforts against sin, will increase them; for we need encouragement to exertion. When temptations to sin abound, we especially want faith to believe, that grace does yet much more abound; the grace, which encourages us to believe, that we shall be made more than conquerors through Him that loved us. Thus then we see, that success in religion depends upon the confidence we place on our Saviour Jesus Christ, who has been evidently set forth before our eyes crucified for our sins. But if, like the Galatians, we are so bewitched by the devil as to hope, after having begun in the Spirit, to be made perfect by the flesh, that is to say, by any efforts of our own, then, however much we may suffer, we shall suffer in vain; because we do "not obey the truth," which tells us that we are saved, "through faith, and that not of ourselves; it is the gift of God; not of works, lest any man should boast." (Ep. ii. 8, 9.)

EXPLANATION.

Verse 6 to 12. St. Paul having reproved the Galatians for not obeying the truth, now proceeds further to explain that doctrine of justification by faith, which was the truth they had rejected. And he proves to them that it was nothing new by observing, (6) Even in the case of Abraham it was his faith, which was accounted as righteousness in him. He was approved of by God for be-

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APPLICATION.

That it is the devil's object to make us trust to our own works for salvation.

When it is written in such plain language, that "no man is justified by the law in the sight of God;" and again, that "by the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified in His sight," (Rom. iii. 20.) one would never expect to find that any man believing the Bible to be true, could build his hope of acceptance with God upon the merit of his own works. And yet how common it is to find people, who read their Bible, and profess to believe it, looking upon themselves as sure of heaven, or at least not at all afraid of going to hell, because they have lived such good lives. As a proof that they are safe, they will recount with the utmost satisfaction all their good qualities of honesty and sobriety, their diligence in the work of their calling, being kind to their neighbours, regular in their church-going, and so forth. And how astonished and angry such people would be, if any one were to say, Well, this is all very good, as far as it goes, and makes you no doubt a very respectable character in the sight of men, but still if this be all, you are yet under the curse of God; "for as many as are of the works of the law are under the curse." They would be surprised no doubt, and greatly offended; but, that so it is, is plain enough, and for this reason:

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that faith in Christ is the only
us. And surely the first

plain to be denied, we should say that it was impossible for men in their senses so to act. We shall find however an explanation of this their strange conduct, by considering the enemy who is at work against us. There was a time, when by keeping the law, men might have lived. Our first parents had but to keep the law, which forbad them to eat of one of the trees of the garden of Eden, in order to escape death; but then alas, the devil succeeded in persuading them to break the law, telling them "Ye shall not surely die." And now, when our fallen nature is so corrupt, that we cannot perfectly obey, our wily enemy turns round, changes his attack, and says, Now keep the law, and ye shall live by it. He knows it is impossible, and he knows also that it is the will of God to justify men through faith; therefore, if by any means he can induce us to follow his advice, he has made our ruin complete. Reader, mark well the danger; consider, have you believed God's word, or the devil's lie? Are you hoping to be justified by keeping the law, or are you expecting to be blessed through faith, in like manner as Abraham was?

EXPLANATION.

Verses 13 and 14. Having fully established the fact, that if we are blessed at all, it must be by faith and not by works; St. Paul now goes on to show upon what our faith is to be exercised. He gives in a few words the Gospel, the glad tidings of great joy, which it is both our duty and our privilege to believe. The good news is this, that (13) Christ

redeemed or delivered us from the curse
 a lay upon us, in consequence of our having
 en God's law. This He has done by being made
 se for us. He died an accursed death; for it
 tten, cursed is any one that hangeth on a tree;
 Deut. xxi. 23.) and He once hung upon the
 suffering the wrath of God which was due to
 sins. The curse thus lay upon Him, in order
 (14) the blessing of Abraham, that is to say, the
 ng of justification by faith, might through His
 come upon the Gentiles, and that we might
 gh faith receive the Holy Spirit, promised to
 rough faith.

APPLICATION.

Christ died to save us *from* our sins, and not *in* our sins.

a condemned malefactor were told that a friend
 s had come forward, and suffered in his stead
 unishment, to which he had been sentenced for
 g broken his country's laws, and that he was
 at liberty to leave his prison, we may easily
 ne, that at first he would doubt the truth of what
 ard; he would be inclined to say, "No, that is
 ssible; who in the world could have cared so
 for me, as to be willing to suffer death in my
 I can never believe that." It would seem
 likely that the jailor was mocking his distress
 false report, than that such an event could
 have taken place. But when he finds his chain

measure what we should expect to in
of men, on whom the curse of God h
for whom the Son of God had Him
curse, that they might be delivered from
imagine the doubt which would arise
upon first hearing of such amazing lov
of the disciples, when they first heard o
tion of our Saviour, that they believed
and this we can understand. It see
news to be true, and for a time they
give credit to what they so much wishe

Now if it were thus with us, if it
whelming feeling of astonishment at
ested love of Christ, which caused me
to doubt the truth of the Gospel, it w
thing so much to be wondered at, or
But alas, the case is far otherwise. S
the generality of mankind, neither dou
Christ having died for sinners, nor care
so as to benefit by it. They are conde
lasting torment; but they are indiffe
They are prisoners in the hold of Satan

and know, what it is to be under the curse of God's broken law, we shall never understand or the blessing of believing in the redemption of

st. Jesus Christ did not die an accursed death, in that we might have the liberty to sin with 7. His object was to procure for us pardon for and deliverance from sin. From what is stated in the fourteenth verse, we see that He obtained two things : first the blessing of Abraham, by which is meant the privilege of being blessed through instead of works : and secondly, the help of the promised Spirit. And it is by the help of the

Spirit granted to all true believers, that we are delivered from the dominion of sin and Satan, and are made saints or holy people.

There then is the proof of faith. It is of no use for a person to say, I believe in Jesus ; I know that He has delivered me from the curse of sin ; while at the same time he is living under the power of it. As in the case of the malefactor above alluded to, that when his chains were loosened, and his prison was opened, he still continued where he was, saying that he believed the report that his friend had made for him, but was so indifferent about it as not to profit by the liberty procured. Who would pity such an one, if the judge at his next coming should reverse the sentence against him to be executed ? At all events, it is certain that a final condemnation is those, who, while they say they believe in Christ, love their sins too well to profit by the deliverance from them which He offers. The cross of Christ is made to them of none effect. And oh, what

a double curse must come upon us, if we not only break God's laws, but also reject Christ who died upon the cross in our behalf.

EXPLANATION.

Verse 15 to 22. St. Paul had been speaking of the promise made by God to Abraham, that in him all the nations of the earth should be blessed; and now he shows how certainly God would be true to His word. He says, I will prove this to you, (15) my brethren, by referring to what passes among men. If it be only between one man and another, that an agreement is entered into, yet if it be legally made, once properly signed and sealed, no one can do away with, or add to the obligations which thus become binding upon both parties. (16) Now God made a promise to Abraham and his seed. Observe, God does not say seeds, in the plural number, as if all the different branches of the family were included; but He simply says, to thy seed, which signifies Christ, and all true believers in Christ, inasmuch as they are all accounted one with Him. (17) Now I say, that this covenant or agreement, which in the first instance was made by God with reference to Christ, could not be set aside by the law of Moses, which was given to the Jews four hundred and thirty years afterwards. It never could have been intended, that this law was to make the promise of no avail. (18) For if we are to inherit Abraham's blessing by keeping the law, then it does not come to us as a gift which had been promised. While it is very clear,

that the blessing to Abraham is a promised gift. (19) It may then be asked perhaps, Why was the law given at all, if salvation cannot come by the keeping of it? I answer, It was given after the covenant was made with Abraham, on account of sin; that is to say, it was intended to restrain the Jews from sin; and also, as they broke it, to convince them of their sinfulness, that so they might be led to see more plainly their need of that Saviour, who was the seed, through whom the promise made to Abraham was to come. And this law was given by angels to Moses, who acted as mediator for the Jews. And it is plain, that this transaction with the Jews had nothing to do with what had been promised to Abraham; because if an agreement be broken up, both parties must agree to it. (20) It is impossible for any one to act as a mediator between two parties, when only one is present; and in giving the law from Mount Sinai, God acted alone, without any reference to Abraham. (21) Is it then to be supposed, that the law which God gave to the Jews, was intended to overthrow His promise already made to Abraham? God forbid that we should think so! If there had been such a law given, as it was possible for men to have been judged by and pronounced guiltless, then indeed our righteousness would have stood upon the ground of our having kept the law. (22) But the Scripture has pronounced us all to be under the guilt of sin, in order that we might all feel our need of trusting to the promise which has been made of our being justified through faith in Jesus Christ, and that this promise must be fulfilled to as many as do really believe in *Him*.

APPLICATION.

The importance of understanding aright the nature of God's covenant with men.

The word covenant applies generally to an agreement made between two parties for their mutual benefit. But we must be aware that the covenants, which God has made with mankind, are for our advantage only. In the first instance, God covenanted or agreed with Adam that all the pleasures of paradise should be his, while he obeyed the command not to eat of the tree of knowledge of good and evil. Adam's happiness was herein alone consulted; but God's gracious intentions were made of none avail by the disobedience which followed. This first agreement with man is called the covenant of works; because all depended upon doing, or not doing, what was commanded. When that was broken, God entered into a second covenant with His creatures on still more favourable terms; and this is called the covenant of grace, because so abundantly merciful. He herein promises, that all the nations of the earth shall be freely, fully, eternally, blessed, if they will only believe in Christ as the author and finisher of their blessedness. Such is the wonderful love of God, that in this agreement nothing is required on the part of man, but that he should feel the value of the gift which is offered, and acknowledge his obligations to the Giver. It seems as though God

to crush the rebellion of His creatures by
 overwhelming weight of His mercy; and such
 defect whenever this mercy is received. But
 far, very far, from being universally received.
 long hold which Satan has in the human
 o often can neither be shaken by terror, nor
 y love. To accept a gift which is wholly
 ed, and to acknowledge it to be so, is what
 e of men's hearts will not stoop to. And
 e however fatal to themselves, they are conti-
 nishing to revive the covenant of works, and
 ade themselves that God has established it;
 f it really were so, every living soul of man
 ish. It is obviously a most important mat-
 s rightly to understand the nature of God's
 with man. If God has made an agreement
 is on one condition, and we are wishing and
 to be saved on another, the consequences
 most fatal. But so it is with many. They
 g to keep a law, which cannot give life, and
 g to be saved by so doing. They are expect-
 blessedness as a reward for their works, which
 promised to "give to them that believe."
 se of this is to be found in pride. Men will
 out that which they are required in sim-
 and humility to believe. The natural man,
 ceiveth not the things of the Spirit of God,
 s that there must be a mistake; that it is
 possible God should have caused eternal life
 d upon such a simple thing as believing.
 But if, instead of reasoning, they would
 rn to know for themselves what believing
 s, experience would prove to them that

faith is not the simple thing they imagine; but that it is an engine mighty through God to the pulling down of the strong holds of Satan; and that where it does really exist, it will cast down imaginations and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bring into subjection every thought to the obedience of Christ. When St. Paul was commissioned by the Spirit of God to say, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved," (Acts xvi. 31,) he said no more than was true; but he said in those few words a great deal more than can possibly be understood by any one who is not a believer. The effect which would follow upon the receiving of Christ into the heart by faith, was known of course to Him, who caused our eternal salvation to rest upon such terms. God knew that in thus providing for our justification, He at the same time provided for our sanctification; for to as many as receive Christ, to them gives He power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe in His name. (See John i. 12.). Faith works such a change, that he who was before dead in trespasses and sins becomes in Christ a new creature, and will thenceforth arise and serve God in holiness of life.

EXPLANATION.

Verse 23 to 29. The Apostle now proceeds to show the use and intent of the law. He says, (23) Until Christ came, who is the object of our faith, we Jews were under the rule of the law, which having broken, we remained like men under sentence of death,

shut up in prison, waiting with desire for the time when the way of justification through faith would clearly be revealed. (24) So then the law taught us our need of a Saviour, and in this way served as a schoolmaster to prepare us for a reception of Christ, that we might be saved by faith in Him. (25) But now that Christ is come, and is received by us as the object of our faith, we are no longer under this schoolmaster. And why should any one wish to be? (26) For all you, who have faith in Christ Jesus, have thereby been received into the family of God. (27) For as many as have been received by baptism into the covenant of mercy made with man through Christ, have put on Christ; that is to say, have become united to Him, are placed in a new condition, and are as it were clothed with a new nature, so that all former distinctions and differences become of no importance. It matters not (28) whether you were originally Jews or Gentiles, slaves or free, men or women; for all are now one family in Christ Jesus. (29) Thus then, if you are real believers in Christ, you are children of Abraham, and heirs of everlasting life and blessedness according to the promise.

APPLICATION.

That our present life was intended as a school to
fit us for a better.

In speaking of the law, it is plain that St. Paul here alluded to that law which was given by Moses to the Jews; but it was the moral, and not the ceremonial part of it that they were unable to keep, and which shut them up under sentence of condemnation; and it was by showing them their hopelessness without Christ, that the law became as it were a schoolmaster to teach them the necessity of looking for justification through faith in Christ. The ceremonial part of the law of Moses, which was intended to keep up a remembrance of the promised Saviour, ceased to be binding when that Saviour came; but the moral law continues still in force, and still acts the part of a schoolmaster to bring us to Christ.

Those who will examine themselves strictly by the law of God, will see the impossibility of being justified, that is, proved clear of guilt, if tried by the law; on the contrary, they will feel themselves condemned by it, and thence see the necessity of seeking some way by which to escape the punishment which guilt deserves. Conviction of sin, which can follow only upon comparing ourselves with what is required of us in the Bible, must ever be the first step towards saving faith in Christ. As no one will send for a doctor, till he knows he is sick; so no one will go to Christ

to save him, till taught by the law to feel his danger as a transgressor of the law. Reader, has the law thus been a schoolmaster to you? Has it condemned you in your own eyes, and proved to you that but for Christ you would perish. Many alas, never give themselves time to think of their condition. The law does not frighten them. Christ does not comfort them. They live as if they did not know there was a hell to escape, or a heaven to gain. The very end and intention for which they are sent into this world is wholly overlooked. But it ought to be remembered, that we are to exist for ever; that having begun to live, we shall go on, in some state or other, to all eternity; and that this life is only intended as a state of reparation for another. We should consider, that God sends us into this world just for the same reason that parents send their children to school, namely, to train them up for the enjoyment of their future existence. We do not send children to school to enjoy themselves, but to learn their duty, and become fit for the station they are afterwards to fill. Such is also the only just view of life. God would have us here learn how we may attain to the promised blessedness of heaven, and how we may be fitted for it. For these purposes He has given us the law to be our schoolmaster to teach us. By it we are first led to Christ as the way of salvation, and then taught how through Christ we may so walk as to please God. Our first business in life should therefore be to study the law of God, to compare our conduct with it, and we shall be thereby humbled under a sense of our sin, and led to rejoice in the blessedness of having a Saviour to go to; and if we rightly apply to Him, He

will clothe us with His own holy nature, and thus fit us for the future enjoyment of the inheritance of the saints in light. St. Paul, according to his usual custom, speaks of the Galatians as being what they ought to be; thereby showing, what is expected of us. He says, "Ye are all children of God by faith in Christ Jesus; for as many of you as have been baptized into Christ, have put on Christ." But as St. Paul was obliged to say of these very Galatians, in the next chapter, "I am afraid of you, lest I have bestowed labour in vain;" so we cannot but be afraid, for many, who like these Galatians, have been by their baptism invested with the privilege of being children of God; we cannot but fear that many, who have thus been admitted into His covenant of mercy, are not living as becomes the children of God, have not put on Christ, are not the seed of Abraham, and therefore will not be partakers of the promised blessing. Here then is a most solemn subject of inquiry, Have I put on Christ? These few words contain so much meaning that they will probably at first sight appear difficult to understand; but on a little consideration we shall see that to "put on Christ" must mean in some way or other to find in Him a covering. And from the rest of Scripture generally we learn, that this covering must be of two kinds. In the first place we have need to be covered by Him from the anger of God due to sin. When we see a storm coming, we feel our need of some place of shelter; and if we understand aright the nature of sin and its awful consequences, we shall gladly look to Christ as the only shelter which can cover us from the storm of God's wrath, when He will come "in flaming fire,

taking vengeance on them that know not God, and obey not the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ." The question then to ask is, Have we fled to Christ for refuge? Have we ever felt our need of Him? Have we profited by the atonement He has made for sin, accepting Him as our Mediator and Intercessor, and rejoiced to find that we have in Him such an Almighty Friend and Saviour. But to put on Christ implies further, the being clothed with His image, covered with a new and holy nature; for if any man be in Christ, that is, united to Christ by His living Spirit, he is a new creature; none can be in Christ for shelter without being in Christ for holiness. The two things go together. To put on Christ is to put off sin. When thus understood, it is indeed a heart-searching question, Have I put on Christ? And we must remember that unless baptism leads to this result, as it is expected it should do, the benefit of it will be lost. We must expect a heavier doom in hell, for having here on earth rejected the mercy by which we were made heirs of heaven.

PRAYER.

O Lord God, mercifully incline my heart to obey the truth. Be graciously pleased clearly to make known to me what the truth is. Impress my mind deeply with the blessed doctrines of the Gospel. Grant that Jesus Christ crucified for my sins may evidently be set forth before me, and be constantly present to my mind. Grant that through faith in Him I may continue to receive larger and fuller sup-

plies of the Holy Spirit. Preserve me from the soul-destroying delusions of Satan, who would persuade men to look for salvation by doing the works of the law. Suffer not my foolish heart so to betray me as to hope that the work of grace, which can only be begun or ended by the Spirit, may be made perfect by the flesh. O grant that the Spirit's work may indeed be begun in me, and finally carried unto perfection. As Abraham believed Thy word, and it was counted to him for righteousness, so may I also believe the Gospel, and be ranked among his children; that so by faith I may be blessed with faithful Abraham. O Lord, be mercifully pleased to open the understanding of all those who hope to be saved by their own good deeds; show them their danger, and the curse which hangs over them for breaking that very law by which they are vainly hoping to be justified. Be pleased to impress this truth strongly on all our minds, that if judged by the law, no man can be justified in Thy sight; that we may learn to feel the inestimable value of that Saviour who has redeemed us from the curse of the law, by being made a curse for us. Grant that all may be made to feel the wretchedness of their condition by nature, that so the blessing of Abraham may come upon them through Jesus Christ, and that through faith in Him they may receive the promised assistance of the Holy Spirit. O Lord, I beseech Thee to give me a right understanding of that covenant of mercy which Thou hast been pleased to make with Thy creatures. Grant that my heart may be duly impressed by the love therein displayed, and that I may feel entire confidence, and trust that

the word which Thou hast spoken shall remain; and that nothing can ever make Thy promise of none effect. Wonderful and astonishing as is Thy goodness, Oh let me never distrust or doubt it. Teach me firmly to believe that while Thou hast condemned us all on account of sin, the promise of every blessing is given by faith in Jesus Christ to them that believe. Help Thou mine unbelief. Grant that the law having acted to me the part of a schoolmaster in bringing me to Christ, I may continue to act as becomes a child of God by faith in Jesus Christ. Grant that having been admitted into covenant with Thee through Christ by baptism, I may indeed put on Christ, that I may be united to Him through faith, and receive upon my heart and life the stamp of His own most holy image. May I thus indeed be Christ's, and therefore Abraham's seed, and an heir of his blessedness to all eternity, according to the promise. O mercifully hear and answer these my imperfect prayers, for the sake of the same, our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. Amen.

CHAPTER IV.

EXPLANATION.

VERSE 1 to 7. In order to show further the folly of those who wished to lead the Christian converts back to the observance of Jewish ceremonies, St.

Paul here points out the superior condition of Christians over Jews, by comparing the latter to a child before he is of age to take possession of his property, and the former to one who is actually in the enjoyment of his estate.

In the last chapter he spoke of the Jews as treated like children, being under the law as a schoolmaster; and carrying on that idea, he says, (1) Now we may observe that the heir of an estate, so long as he is a child, differs not from a servant; that is to say, although the property is really his, yet he is as much under the control of others as a servant. (2) He must be under the management of his guardians and instructors, until the time when, according to his father's appointment, he may take possession of the estate. (3) So in like manner we Jews were treated like children, and bound to obey all the rules and regulations of the Mosaic law, which contained only the elements, that is, the first beginning of religious knowledge, and in which there was much of a worldly nature. (4) But when the time was fully come for realizing the expectations of men, and fulfilling the promises made to them, God sent His Son Jesus Christ into the world, who, by being born of a woman, took upon Himself our human nature; and being born a Jew, He became subject to the law, (5) in order that He might deliver those who were under the yoke and curse of the law, and make them the sons of God by adoption into His family. (6) And now since you who have received Christ as your Saviour, are thus admitted to rank as sons, God has put into your hearts the Spirit of His Son, by which you are led to cry out, with feelings of grateful

love, Abba, which means Father. (7) Therefore you are not to be regarded any longer as a servant, but as a son; and if you are really a son, then it follows that you are an heir to all the blessings promised by God, which come to us through Jesus Christ.

APPLICATION.

The superior value of a heavenly over an earthly inheritance.

These few verses express infinitely more concerning God's love, and our blessedness as Christians, than can now be fully understood; but as it is our duty to know much, and feel deeply on these subjects, we have need to meditate seriously and frequently on such passages of Scripture. We all put far too much value upon worldly honours, and distinctions. We are all most sadly insensible to the unspeakable privileges and blessings conferred upon us through Christ. As Christians we have set before us an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away; but by more than half the world such a prospect is thought little of, in comparison with being the heir of a good estate. It is very common to hear people spoken of as happy and enviable, just in proportion as their prospects are good as to worldly prosperity. To be the heir of a noble estate, to have interest with men in power, to have the prospect of succeeding to some profitable business, these are things highly valued; while the inheritance of the

saints in light is often quite despised. Even to name such a thing in some company would be to excite ridicule and contempt. But what a deluded creature must he be, who would rather be the heir of a nobleman, than "an heir of God through Christ." What miserable ignorance! What fatal blindness does this betray! Reader, have you any just sense of the real value of things? Can you rightly estimate what it is to be adopted into the family of God, or have you a far better idea of the value of money? Perhaps you may say you have been taught the value of money by the want of it. Oh may you never learn to know the value of a heavenly inheritance by the loss of it. But many it is to be feared will only understand the value of God's heritage when they lift up their eyes in hell being in torment. Oh! let us not thus despise the riches of God's love. Let us stir up our hearts to grateful praise and devoted affection, by contemplating that love which induced the Father to send, and the Son to come, in the fulness of time, to redeem us not only from the burden of the ceremonial law, but from the curse of the broken moral law. Oh let us solemnly meditate on the great work which has thus been done for us, and let us inquire whether that work has been done in us, which follows as the consequence of believing the glorious truths of the Gospel. Observe, it is here stated that if we are the sons of God, then God has sent forth the Spirit of His Son into our hearts. And is it so with us? Are we led by the Spirit? "If any man have not the Spirit of Christ he is none of His." (Rom. viii. 9.) All Christians are the heirs of God in one sense. We all have a title

to the heavenly inheritance, given to us in the holy sacrament of baptism; but we shall not inherit it unless we be conformed to the image of that blessed Jesus, who is the first-born among many brethren. (See Rom. viii. 29.) We must receive His Spirit into our hearts, and be sanctified by that Spirit, or else He will be ashamed to call us brethren. (See Heb. ii. 11.) Having examined ourselves in this way concerning our resemblance to Christ, by whom and with whom alone we can share the privileges of sonship, let us ask ourselves, can we, in the confidence and joy of a child, look up to God, and cry Abba, Father? But alas, there are many who now call Him Father, whom He will not hereafter call His sons. Let us therefore search our hearts with deep humility and sincerity, and pray earnestly to know the true condition in which we stand; lest having had a right and title given us to so glorious an inheritance, we should after all, through our own neglect, be disinherited. Let us pray that God will send forth more and more of the Spirit of His Son into our hearts, and teach us better to know the full value of being “an heir of God through Christ.”

EXPLANATION.

Verse 8 to 20. St. Paul having shown how inferior was the condition of a Jew to that of a Christian, and how foolish therefore it was in them to think of turning again from liberty to bondage, goes on now to speak of the condition of the Galatians before their

conversion. Yet, he says, (8) before you received the knowledge of the true God, were enslaved in the worst of bondage; for you were worshipping and serving idols, things that had nothing of the nature of God in them; (9) but now having learnt to know God, or rather I should say, having mercifully been acknowledged by God, and received into His family, how comes it that you turn back upon the Jewish ceremonies, those weak and poor elements or first steps, as we may say, to religious knowledge? How is it that to these things you now wish to be in bondage? (10) You keep the feasts and fasts and other ceremonies appointed for the Jews, as if these were necessary to your salvation; (11) which makes me fear, that all the labour I have bestowed upon you will be in vain. (12) Brethren, with regard to these things, I wish you to follow my example, and do as I do; for I was once like you in bondage to Jewish ceremonies. And believe me it is with no feelings of resentment that I have written to you. I do not feel that you have personally injured me in any way. On the contrary, I have a grateful remembrance of your conduct towards me, when I was with you; for (13) it was under great bodily infirmity that I preached the Gospel to you at first. (14) But this my trial, which was an affliction in my body, did not cause you to despise or reject me. For you received me as though I had been an angel sent from God, or as if I had even been Christ Himself. (15) How truly blessed and happy you then expressed yourselves to be in the enjoyment of true Gospel liberty; but alas, how are things now changed! Then so great was your affection towards me as the instrument of your

happiness, that you would have plucked out your own eyes, and have given them to me, if that would have done me any good. (16) And have I now lost your love, because I tell you the truth? (17) Your present teachers seem very zealously affected towards you, but it is not your real benefit which they seek. They would wish to exclude you, that is, shut you out from the enjoyment of that liberty, which, as a preacher of the true Gospel, I offered to you, in order that you may be the more under their own control. (18) To have our affections strongly excited in a good cause, is a good thing; but then our zeal should be steady, and not like your affection for me, which it seems lasted only while I remained among you. (19) My dear children, I call you such, because I did hope, that through the means of my preaching you had received a spiritual new birth. I suffer again on your account such distress of mind as may be compared to the pain of child-bearing. Such is my anxiety about you, until I know that you are really spiritually alive, Christ being formed in you. (20) I wish I were with you now, for I hope I should be able to change my opinion of you, and to speak in a different manner. At present I stand in doubt concerning you.

APPLICATION.

Religious zeal must be persevering and well directed.

In the account which St. Paul here gives of the Galatians, we see but a too faithful picture of what is often to be met with in the present day. It displays the character of an unstable professor, one who, according to our Saviour's parable, receives the seed of truth into a stony heart: "he heareth the word, and anon with joy receiveth it; yet hath he not root in himself." (Matt. xiii. 20.) All seems to promise well for a time; but by and by it appears but too clearly, that no real change of heart has ever taken place. Such persons, by making great professions for a time, and then falling away, certainly cause great scandal to religion. But be it observed, it is not the zeal of the young convert which is to be deplored, but his want of stability. We often hear great objections made against those, who in the ardour of their first love, are ready to pluck out their own eyes; that is to say, ready to make any sacrifice to prove the burning zeal and fervent affection, with which they have received the message of mercy; as though it were not good to be zealously affected always in a good thing. But this is the language of the cold-hearted worldling, who feels himself reprov'd in his indolence and self-indulgence by the burning zeal of others. The lesson which we are hence to learn, hangs upon that little word, "always." We

are not to be hot to-day, and cold to-morrow, in the cause of Christ and His Gospel; but always zealous, always warmly interested in, and always deeply affected by, every thing in which His honour and the good of souls is concerned. We have therefore to watch, not against zeal, but against growing lukewarm in the things of God. There is however another most important point to be considered, and that is, as to the direction of our zeal. We must not only be zealous always, but it must always be in a good thing. The Galatians did not cease to be interested about religion altogether. It was the direction which their zeal had taken, and not the loss of it, which caused St. Paul to be afraid that he had bestowed upon them labour in vain. They were still zealously affected, but not well. There cannot be a more sad and solemn subject for regret than to see a person who once seemed to know God, or rather to be known of God, having been admitted to share the privileges of Christ's glorious Gospel, and having appeared to be blessed with its vital joys, turning again to such weak and beggarly elements as a mere ceremonial religion. But so it is with many, of whom for a time it might have been hoped, that they were spiritually born again. The ceremonies of religion are like the shell of fruit which preserves the kernel; they are intended to foster the precious seed of truth, and keep it from decay. But as from the shell without the kernel, nothing will spring, so eternal life can never follow from a religion which consists in outward ceremonies, while the heart remains unchanged. But it is with such a religion as this, that Satan too often blinds the eyes of men

to the real condition of their souls. The want of love to Christ is not perceived, while there is so much apparent zeal in His cause. A person who is very regular in his attendance at church, constantly at the Lord's Supper, attentive to the performance of private and domestic worship, is likely to think himself very religious; but if by these means he hopes to make his peace with God, instead of looking simply to the precious blood of Christ to cleanse his soul from sin, his zeal in such services will but deceive him to his eternal ruin. Let us then beware of self-deception. Let us carefully watch over the nature of our zeal for God, as well as its constancy. And let us never forget that the only real signs of a spiritual birth are to be found in an entire and humble reliance upon the atonement of Christ, and a conformity to His holy image. Until Christ be thus formed in us, we must stand in doubt concerning the one grand question, Will my soul be saved or lost?

We may observe further, that as the Galatians were deceived by listening to false teachers, who seemed to have their interest at heart, and to be very zealously affected in the cause of religion, so it is necessary for us to use caution, and not to allow ourselves to be influenced by any, who, let their pretensions be what they will, would lead us from Christ, instead of to Him. We must avoid as dangerous all those, who by occupying our minds with the forms and ceremonies of religion, would divert our attention from the spiritual efficacy of the Cross, and the life-giving influence of faith in the Saviour of the world. We must ever remember that the enemy of souls is

most subtle, and the nearer he can transform himself into an angel of light, the better he can effect his cruel purpose of frustrating the grace of God, and making the cross of Christ of none effect.

EXPLANATION.

Verse 21 to 31. In order to explain farther the nature of the law and the Gospel, the Apostle now draws our attention to the history of Isaac and Ishmael. (21) You, he says, who seem so desirous of living under the law, tell me, do you not read the books of the Old Testament, which contain the law? (22) There you will find it written that Abraham had two sons, the one by Hagar, who was a servant, or rather a slave; the other by Sarah his wife, who was a free woman. (23) Ishmael, the son of the servant, was born in a natural manner; but Isaac, the son of the free woman, was born out of the common course of nature, in consequence of God's promise. (24) Now these things are an allegory; that is to say, they contain a double meaning. We are not to regard this history only as true matter of fact, but may derive from it spiritual instruction also. These two women, Hagar and Sarah, represent the two covenants, that is, the two dispensations of the law and the Gospel. The law, which was given upon Mount Sinai, and creates a servile fear, may be compared to Hagar. (25) For indeed the word Hagar, the meaning of which is a Rock, is one of the names by which Mount Sinai, in Arabia, is now called; and she well represents the earthly Jerusa-

lem, whose inhabitants are still under bondage to the slavish obligations of the law. (26) But on the contrary, the spiritual Jerusalem, that is, the Christian church, like Sarah, is free, and is the common mother of all true believers. (27) Concerning this church, it was written by the prophet Isaiah, Rejoice, thou barren, that bearest not; break forth, and cry, thou that travailest not; for the desolate hath many more children than she which hath an husband. (See Isa. liv. 1.) This prophecy has begun to be fulfilled in us. (28) Now brethren, we, like Isaac, are the children of promise. And there is a still farther resemblance; (29) for as Ishmael, who was born in a natural manner, vexed and troubled Isaac, who was born in a peculiar manner, by the power of God's Spirit, so it is now: the Jews persecute the Christians. (30) However, let us observe what the Scripture says concerning these two. We find it written, Cast out the bond woman and her son; for the son of the bond woman shall not be heir with the son of the free woman. (See Gen. xxi. 10.) (31) Thus, brethren, we may take comfort to ourselves, because we are not the children of the bond woman, but of the free.

APPLICATION.

Salvation by grace, the appointment of God, neglected by some,
and opposed by others.

Surely it becomes us to rejoice that we are born under the Gospel dispensation, which is as much more blessed than the Jewish, as Isaac was more favoured than Ishmael. No one can read the account of Abraham's family, and not perceive that the son of the free woman was in a far better condition than he who was born son to the bond slave. St. Paul refers to this history to impress upon his christian converts a just sense of the goodness of God towards them; and it ought to be turned by us to the same account. How thankful we ought to be for the privilege of being considered, not as servants, but as children; being permitted to look up to God as a Father, instead of trembling in His presence, like a slave before his master. The consciousness of having broken God's laws times without number, might well make us fear, if we were expecting to be dealt with as a servant who is to receive according to his deserts. But since we are no more servants, but sons, it is our happiness to know, that our Father pitieth His children, and is not severe to mark what is done amiss. Then the consciousness of having deserved punishment, when at the same time we know that we are forgiven, excites not fear, but gratitude and love. And this is the happy condition into which we are

brought by Jesus Christ. This is the liberty and joy we are permitted to feel as being children, not of the bond woman, but of the free. But alas, there are many who never give these things a thought. Our obligations to God are so little felt by them, that the liberty wherewith Christ has made us free, is what they know and care nothing about. They are so taken up with thinking about their temporal concerns, that they give no attention whatever to the subject of their spiritual condition. And there are others, who altogether oppose themselves to the Gospel plan of salvation. Because they would be wiser than God, they resist the doctrines of free grace, saying that it favours sin. They think that to teach men to believe that God has blotted out their transgressions for His own sake, (see Isa. xliii. 25,) and not for any thing in themselves, is to make them careless livers. But "because the foolishness of God is wiser than men," (1 Cor. i. 25,) experience proves the contrary. This plan of salvation by faith, which is so much spoken against by those who have not embraced it, is found in those who do receive it, to work that holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord. The liberty of looking up to God as a reconciled Father, creates love; and love is a more prevailing motive to action than fear.

We need not, however, wonder at the opposition which the Gospel meets with; because as formerly, "he that was born after the flesh, persecuted him that was born after the Spirit, even so it is now;" that is to say, the unrenewed heart of the worldly man does, and ever will, despise the doctrines of the Cross, which are received by those, and those only,

spiritually born again. But though the may be looked upon with contempt, and may be compared, as it were, to a woman who has no hope of children, yet may we rejoice and break forth into praise because a most abundant family will spring from the Gospel, whom God will accept and reward while those who are hoping to become holy by their own devising, will in the end be disappointed than the Jews; for it will be found, according to the figurative language of Isaiah, that she that hath many more children than she that hath no husband; that is to say, God will not gather himself a people in that way which appears to men carnal, but in that way which He has appointed and blessed.

Reader, how are you affected by this subject? Is it with you a matter of real joy that you are not like the bond woman, but of the free? Do you feel as if you did truly understand the value of the glorious Gospel of the blessed God? Or are you taken up with the business of this life, as if you had nothing to know, nor much to care, how you stand before God; both ignorant and indifferent whether you will inherit heaven or hell? Or again, are you building your hopes of heaven upon your good conduct and respectable character, and rejecting the offer of a free salvation through faith in Jesus Christ? These are questions which every wise man should put to himself, and take time to answer; for it is a matter which hangs upon them.

PRAYER.

O Lord God, who hast mercifully caused me to be born in a Christian country, where the true light shines, grant me grace to profit by these privileges. Show me the true value and blessedness of the Gospel. Thou, who according to Thine abundant mercy didst send forth Thy Son into the world to be born of a woman, and to die for our sins, teach me to feel the immensity of Thy love, and to be more and more deeply affected by it. Be pleased to send forth the Spirit of Thy Son into my heart, that I may with the affection and gratitude of a child cry, Abba, Father. Mercifully grant that I may be taught to know by experience what it is to be an heir of God through Christ. Incline my heart properly to value that glorious inheritance which is prepared for the saints. Teach me to feel that all worldly things are vain and worthless in comparison. Lord, if Thou hast been pleased to make Thyself known to me, and to show me what is that spiritual service which is right and acceptable in Thy sight, preserve me from ever again turning back to worship Thee with mere heartless forms and ceremonies. Grant that I may continually grow in the knowledge of Thee, and love and serve Thee more and better. Assist me to profit by all the means of grace and opportunities of learning the truth, which are afforded to me. Suffer not the labours of Thy Ministers to be in vain. Give me an anxious concern for Thine honour, an abiding zeal in Thy service, and a constant love towards all

e who are the real friends of my soul. Preserve
 from the influence of such as would, by their
 generous counsels, exclude me from enjoying the
 goodness of that salvation, which Christ has pur-
 chased for me. Above all things I desire and pray
 Christ may truly be formed in me; that I may
 stand in doubt concerning the everlasting condi-
 tion of my soul; but that I may see in my life and
 conversation the proof that I am indeed spiritually
 again. O Lord, I pray for the spread of the
 Gospel. Have mercy upon all those who are now
 in bondage to sin and Satan, and turn their hearts.
 Enable them to see their madness in rejecting that
 salvation, which Christ so freely offers. Grant that
 the heathen countries, which from ignorance of Thee are
 dark and desolate, may soon rejoice and break forth
 in singing upon receiving Thy blessed Gospel.
 Grant that all Jews, heathens, and unbelievers, who
 are now the children of bondage, may be converted,
 and of Thine infinite mercy may be permitted to share
 the inheritance with Thine own people. And gra-
 tify, O Lord, make me watchful over myself, that
 as I am thus praying for others, I may not in the
 process of time myself be cast out. Grant that I may faithfully
 serve Thee in this life present, and finally be admitted
 into Thy heavenly kingdom, for the sake and through
 the mediation of Thy Son, our Saviour Jesus Christ.

EXPLANATION.

VERSE 1 to 6. St. Paul having explained the nature of that liberty wherewith Christ has made us free, exhorts the Galatians to (1) abide in it; to continue firm in the true doctrine of the Gospel, and not to suffer themselves to be brought back to that the ceremonial religion of the Jews, in some sort a servile bondage, was a means of salvation. (2) Behold, he says, I have written unto you, that if you suffer yourselves to be circumcised, under an idea that it is necessary to your salvation, then you must expect no benefit from it. (3) For I say again to every man among you that is circumcised, that he binds himself to the whole law, and makes his justification and condemnation to rest upon his keeping or neglecting it perfectly. (4) And thus Christ becomes

their having such faith in what Christ has done for them, as will create the love that produces the fruit of good works.

APPLICATION.

Christ will be all or nothing in effecting our salvation.

St. Paul here repeats again in a most solemn manner what he had expressed before, that if the Galatians put themselves under the law, to the law alone they must look for salvation, as in that case they were fallen from grace. We are hence to learn the important truth, that Christ will save altogether, or not at all. He will have all the glory of His own glorious work, and will not give any part of it to another. This is a consideration which, as it is so pressed upon our notice throughout this epistle, evidently demands our most serious attention; and the reason why it is so strongly put before us is, because the doctrine stands so much opposed to human inclination. The pride of man naturally wishes to have some share of merit in his own justification, if not the whole honour of his soul's salvation. There are many people very well inclined to hope, that Christ will make up by the merit of His death for what they feel to be deficient in the degree of their own obedience. They are aware, that if weighed in the balance of God's justice, they must be found wanting; and therefore, though on the whole they think pretty well of themselves, they are very willing

to accept of Christ as a make-weight in their
We find people very often saying as much, for
detailing their own good qualities, and stating
they never committed any great sin, they will
but what we have done amiss we hope the
God will forgive for the sake of Jesus Christ.
such views as these are not according to the
Jesus Christ did not come into the world to meet
our deficiencies, but to offer Himself as a sacrifice
in our stead, and to save us from the hell which
sins deserve. Unless therefore we feel that we
such a Saviour as this, it is in vain to look to
He did not die upon the cross for such as could
pretty well for themselves, and only wanted a
help, and pardon for a few sins. He came into
world to save sinners. He came to seek and
them that were lost, utterly lost, ruined, and
And those only who are conscious of such being
desperate condition, can properly acknowledge
feel the debt of gratitude which is due to Him

This to know, and this to feel, is faith. We
know and feel that we are of ourselves in a de-
condition. Nothing short of sinners deserving
And we must further know and feel to our
pressible joy, that Christ has made a full, perfect
sufficient satisfaction to God for us, and in deliv-
us from hell has also given us heaven as His
gift. If this is what we truly believe, it is
which certainly will work by love, and that
what will profit us any thing. Such a faith
will undoubtedly produce the fruit of good
There will be that humility of heart on account
sin, which will show itself in meekness, and lo-

of spirit; and there will be that grateful love to Christ, which must create an anxious desire to please Him, and do Him service. It is clearly so according to His own declaration. "If a man love me, he will keep my words." (John xiv. 23.) Let each one ask himself, Have I such faith as this? Is it the abiding conviction of my mind that I have grievously sinned, that I deserve nothing from God but condemnation? And again, Am I showing by my zeal for Christ, and devotedness to His service, that love which springs from knowing that I am through Him saved and blessed, not for time only, but for eternity?

EXPLANATION.

Verse 7 to 15. St. Paul, having shown the true nature of the Gospel, and that a dependance upon the law is inconsistent with it, now takes occasion to express his surprise and sorrow, that the Galatians should have fallen into this error, and begs them to reconsider the subject. He says, (7) For a time you went on well in your Christian course; how came it that you allowed these false teachers to hinder you, and make you reject the truth? (8) This opinion, which you have been persuaded to adopt concerning the law, comes not from God, or from me, who, as His instrument, called you into the faith of the Gospel. Beware how you listen to false doctrines, for (9) a little leaven soon leavens the whole lump; that is to say, when error once begins to creep in, it will soon corrupt a whole church. (10) However I am confident through God, that when you read this letter,

may judge how false this must be, because, w
then still suffer persecution from the Jews?
would but give up the doctrine that salvation
only through faith in the cross of Christ, all r
offence would be at an end. (12) I hearti
that those, who by false reports, thus trou
mislead you, were excommunicated, and so go
(13) For by the Gospel you are certainly c
the enjoyment of liberty, from the burdensom
monies of the law of Moses. Only let me w
against so using your christian liberty, as that i
prove the occasion of sin, either by being n
excuse for indulging the appetites of the bo
cause for disputing among yourselves; but let
guide you, that you may be willing to see
another. (14) For with regard to our fellow cr
the law which is to guide us may all be expr
this short sentence: Thou shalt love thy ne
as thyself. (15) But if you quarrel among you
and give way to violent and bitter passion

APPLICATION.

That diligence, perseverance, and caution, are all necessary
in running the Christian race.

In speaking of the christian course, St. Paul says of the Galatians, that they did run well. From which we may observe, that when we make a profession of religion, we are like men running a race, having a rich prize as the object for which we are vigorously to exert ourselves. It is well to have this thought frequently put before us. It is well to be reminded of the importance of our christian calling, and to be taught that religion is not that light and easy matter, which may be attended to at our leisure, and may prosper without much thought or concern. It is not, as many seem to think it, a secondary consideration, which may be attended to, after our worldly interests are secured. No; religion, if it do not occupy the first place in our hearts, and draw forth all our energies, will profit us nothing. No one imagines that a race can be won without exertion; neither can heaven be attained without effort. Fruitless wishes, and vain hopes seem to constitute the chief part of some people's religion; but as well might we hope to get to the top of a mountain while loitering at the foot of it, and wishing ourselves there, as expect to get to heaven by merely wishing and hoping to go there when we die. Again, we may observe that it is not enough to set out well; we must persevere in a religious course. If a man running a

on the warfare is accomplished, and the vict
Neither is it enough that we continue to run
christian course, we must see to it that we ru
and for this end we must watch against the
novelty. If we are persuaded by any means
up new views in religion, we must carefully
whence they came, and whither they wil
whether they are the fruit of that Spirit, by
we were first called into the Gospel, or whet
be not the persuasions of some who are trou
the church of Christ. This caution is par
needful in the present day, when many restles
are at work, stirring up strife and divisions am
children of God, and drawing them away
flattering devices, from the simplicity whic
Christ. These agents of evil are generally
with excellent intentions, and proposing som
which in itself appears most desirable; if no
would have no attraction for, and do no misch
religious mind. The great enemy who is at

by prayer. And let us especially beware of any scheme, by which we may escape the offence of the Cross. As a simple dependance upon the salvation worked out for us by Christ upon the cross, is above all things offensive to His enemies, we must carefully shun those, who under the fairest pretences of leading us to holiness, would persuade us to adopt principles more acceptable to the reasonings of human pride. Again, on the other hand, we must beware of those, who under the plea of Gospel liberty, would lead us into the sin of schism, namely, the sin of raising disputes, and causing divisions in the church of Christ. From those who will not look for salvation through the precious blood of Christ, we must separate; but in regard to other matters, on which men's minds may lawfully differ, we are to exercise love one towards another, and not allow these differences to produce, as they too often do, the most bitter strife; so that men professing themselves to be the disciples of the meek and lowly Jesus, are so violent in their opposition to each other, that verily they are ready to bite and devour one another. And we cannot but fear that they will be consumed one of another; that their angry passions, under pretence of religious zeal, will be their mutual ruin. May God ever preserve us steadfast in the faith, and make us ready at all times in love to serve one another.

EXPLANATION.

Verse 16 to 26. The enemies of St. Paul were very likely to say that the doctrines he taught

hearts, and your fleshy lusts and sinners will not then have dominion over you. (1) be it remembered, the flesh, which means corrupt nature of man, always opposes that which is spiritual and holy; and on the contrary, that which is spiritual, resists that which is fleshly, so that these two principles are constantly at war against each other, and make it impossible altogether what you would wish to do. (2) if you are governed by the spiritual religion of Christ, then you are not under that law, under which final condemnation would follow for the slightest sin. (19) Now the works of the flesh are easily known; they are adultery, fornication, impure thoughts, wanton behaviour, idolatry, witchcraft, which is either pretending to supernatural power, or really exercising it by the agency of the devil; hatred, variance, contentions, wrath, strife, rebellion against lawful authority, whether in church or state, teaching

peace of conscience before God, and, as far as possible, a life of peace with all mankind; patience under sufferings and wrongs; gentleness of manner; a desire to do as much good as possible; confident trust in God; (23) meekness of disposition, and a temperate use of all lawful pleasure. Where such conduct as this exists, there is no need of the law. (24.) And all whom Christ will own as His disciples, have through the assistance of His Spirit crucified the flesh, and overcome the evil inclinations and affections of the natural man. (25) If then we profess to be made alive through the Spirit of Christ, we must prove it by bringing forth in our life and conduct these fruits of the Spirit. (26) Let us not then be vain glorious of our religious liberty, thereby causing others to be provoked, or exciting the spirit of envy and discord.

APPLICATION.

The duty of considering whether we are being led by the flesh,
or by the Spirit.

From this passage of Scripture we may learn, that there is an inward warfare going on in the heart of every real christian, and that victory over sin cannot be complete, while we continue in the flesh. It sometimes happens in seasons of strong temptation and distress of mind, that even the *most decidedly* religious people will incline to

think that they must have made some great mistake, and cannot possibly have found the narrow way which leadeth to life, or otherwise they would not be so sorely let and hindered in running the heavenly race. Despair is ready to take hold upon them, and despair is altogether opposed to faith; and by faith it is that we are instructed to wait for the hope of righteousness. (See verse 5.)

It is most important, therefore, that we should know and well consider the true nature of the christian life, and what it is we are to expect. If we know that a struggle between the flesh and the Spirit is to be the consequence of becoming a disciple of Christ, then we shall know that not to feel this conflict would be a bad sign indeed, but that it is no cause for despair, when we find ourselves so harassed by temptation. We may well imagine that to those who are led by the flesh, the current of life will flow far easier than to those who are led by the Spirit; inasmuch as it is smoother and pleasanter to swim with the stream, than to toil against it. Though there may be at times some stings of conscience, some merciful strivings of the Holy Spirit, which it requires some effort to resist, yet the general course of the worldly man will be a ready and easy obedience to his own natural inclinations; while they that are Christ's must experience what it is to crucify the flesh with the affections and lusts. If we desire a proof that we are really walking after the Spirit, we shall find it not in the absence of temptation, but in the suffering which arises from fighting against it. Crucifixion is a dreadful death, a death of lingering agony;

and when applied to the destruction of sin, it is a term conveying to the mind a just idea of the long continued, and painful struggle which will precede its final destruction. Sin which lives and reigns in the unrenewed heart, dies by inches in the real child of God. Die it must, but it will die hard.

If then all they who are Christ's have crucified the flesh, it becomes a most important question for each one to ask, Have I known anything of this painful conflict? It is useless to read the Scriptures, if we never stop to examine ourselves by them. The passage before us especially requires it, that we may use it as a means of knowing to whom we belong; whether to Christ, or to the devil. The distinction is clearly marked. If we are doing the works of the flesh, we are children of the devil, but if we are crucifying the flesh, and led by the Spirit, then are we Christ's. That such is the fact, nothing can more plainly declare than the words of St. Paul. But alas, his threatening language is not generally believed. Does it appear, by the way in which people find excuses for themselves, and make light of their faults, as if they really believed, that when they fall into sin, their souls are in the utmost danger? Do people talk of an occasional fit of drunkenness, or an act of fornication, or a burst of passion, as if they thought such things would shut them out of the kingdom of heaven? There is no anxiety expressed, no distress apparent: it may even be that such things are talked about as a good joke. Alas, we often find even people making some profession of religion more

not willingly have done, but would rather have
than so have grieved the Holy Spirit. The
quence of such a fall will necessarily be
grief; but there need be no despair. If
be heartily confessed and truly repented of,
surely, for Christ's sake, be blotted out. I
believer look in humble penitence to the
Christ, and he shall have pardon, and his
and his shame for having fallen into sin
a clear proof that the Spirit of Christ is d
in him; while on the other hand to make s
of sin, as to suppose it may be excused, is an
clear proof of being led not by the Spi
by the flesh. Mark this, Reader: if you
your sins can be excused, you are not a
of God. If only you have given way to an
temper, the Bible condemns you; and if you
the provocation which called forth your wra
justify it, the devil must have told you so,

the opinions of men there is a great difference between one sin and another. But we may observe, that living at variance with our neighbours, or indulging a spirit of envy, is placed upon the same footing with murder. And fornication, which some make so light of, because alas so common, stands side by side with adultery. And of each and all alike it is said, "they which do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God." Men may flatter themselves, if they choose, with false hope; but it will profit them nothing. The word of the Lord standeth sure; and in the last great day it will be found so. Let us then now listen, before it be too late, to the warning voice which declares in the next chapter, "He that soweth to his flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption; but he that soweth to the spirit, shall of the spirit reap life everlasting."

PRAYER.

Almighty Father, I beseech Thee to keep me steadfast in the liberty wherewith Christ has made me free. Grant that I may never be again entangled with the vain hope of saving my own soul by any thing that I can do of myself without Christ. Preserve me from seeking to be justified by the works of the law, and thus falling from grace. Teach me through the Spirit to wait for the hope of righteousness by faith. Lord, increase my faith. Lord, I believe, help Thou mine unbelief. Strengthen me day by day in that true faith

practices, of those who are troublers of His
Make me ready to suffer any persecution
than deny the power and efficacy of the
of Christ. Grant that the liberty of the
may never be to me an occasion of sin;
may never lead me to be careless and self-ind
But grant that I may readily devote my
the spirit of love to the service of others,
to glorify Thy name. Lord, help me to
in the Spirit, and not to fulfil the lusts of the
Teach me to resist, and enable me to overcome
temptations by which I may be assaulted.
that in my life and conversation, I may bring forth
the fruits of the Spirit. Grant that I may abound
love, both towards Thee, and all mankind. Grant
spiritual joy, and inward peace. Enable me
gentleness and goodness patiently to endure.
me a meek spirit, and teach me to be temperate
things. Lord, I do earnestly desire to know

CHAPTER VI.

EXPLANATION.

VERSE 1 to 5. St. Paul having in the former part of his letter, endeavoured to instruct the Galatians concerning those points of doctrine wherein they had been misled, concludes with some practical observations concerning their conduct towards each other. (1) Supposing, he says, any one among you, my brethren, is overcome by the power of temptation, and falls into sin, do you then, who are striving to walk according to the Spirit, consider it as your duty to endeavour to restore such to a right state of mind; but remember it must be done with the greatest meekness, and humility; considering your own danger, and that you may yourself be tempted in like manner. (2) Endeavour to help one another under every burden, whether of a temporal, or spiritual nature; in this way you will fulfil the law of Christ, which enjoins that we should love one another. (3) For if a man is puffed up with pride, and fancies himself something very great, when he is not, he only deceives himself. (4) But to prevent this, let each one try and examine himself, and prove his own doings, so that if there be matter of rejoicing, he may find it in his own conscience, and not seek it in the praises of men. (5) For in the last great day, it will signify nothing what others

have thought about us ; each one must answer for himself, and bear the punishment of his own sins,

APPLICATION.

Neglecting to reprove others, or doing it in a haughty manner, equally wrong.

The duty here set before us of correcting and counselling those who are overtaken in a fault, is one of the most difficult and painful we have to perform. The consequence is, that by many it is altogether neglected, and by others executed improperly, being done in a spirit exactly opposite to that meekness enjoined by the Apostle. To the man who thinks himself to be something, when he is nothing, the task of reproofing others may be acceptable enough, but then how will he do it ? Not meekly ; not with an humble conviction that he too may be tempted, and fall in like manner ; no, but in the spirit of pride and self conceit. Let us then reflect upon the subject, and consider whether we have not fallen into one or other of these faults ; either neglecting to reprove our neighbour for his good, or doing it in an improper manner.

When Cain was asked, “ Where is Abel thy brother ? ” He answered, “ Am I my brother’s keeper ? ” Now there are many among us who, if their thoughts were put into words, would say much the same thing. My brother may have fallen into sin, but *what is that to me ?* “ Am I my brother’s keeper ? ” And is

not this a most selfish sinful indifference to the welfare of an immortal soul? Is this fulfilling the law of Christ? Is this bearing one another's burdens? We are certainly in one sense our brother's keeper. We are bound by the love wherewith Christ hath loved us, to love one another, and to use our utmost efforts to do good to our brethren, and especially to watch for their souls. But again, there are many who feel it to be their duty to reprove, rebuke, and exhort their erring brethren, who yet do altogether neglect to do so. The reasons given are, a fear of doing more harm than good, by irritating instead of mending; or a fancied humility, which feels unworthy to take the office of guide to others. With these, and such like fair sounding excuses, it often happens, that Satan silences the voice of conscience; while self love, that is, a love of ease and quiet, is the real cause of this neglect of duty. It is no doubt a most unwelcome office to tell a man of his fault; it may even when done in the kindest manner, be resented, and cause the loss of a friend. And if taken properly, it must produce distress, which to a feeling mind will cause as much pain as it inflicts. Nevertheless, cost what it may, the duty is laid upon us, and we must not shrink from it; we must not see a brother overtaken in a fault, and not endeavour in the spirit of meekness to restore such an one. We must not flatter ourselves that we are led by the Spirit, unless we thus feel the infinite value of an immortal soul, and act accordingly. If we saw our neighbour's house on fire, we should probably not hesitate to try and put out the flames, though it might be with danger to ourselves. And that we are not equally

ready to risk our happiness in trying to rescue his soul, arises from want of faith in unseen things. We are not sufficiently impressed with the belief that unforsaken, unrepented sin, must lead to the torment of a flame that never can be put out. Surely if this truth were kept constantly before our mind's eye, we should be bolder, and venture more in behalf of our fellow creatures, whom Satan is leading blindfold to hell. But while we watch against the lukewarmness and self indulgence, which can quietly leave the sinner to perish in his sin, let us also watch against that pride which, while it may lead us to offer a haughty and therefore probably an unprofitable rebuke to others, will certainly be the ruin of our own souls. The deepest humility and the utmost tenderness can alone be becoming in the address of one sinner to another. He that knows any thing of his own heart, knows that it is capable of any iniquity, and that by the grace of God alone he is what he is. Those who are really spiritual, that is, taught by the Spirit of God, will certainly feel this, and they alone can properly restore an erring brother. Before therefore, we undertake to offer reproof, let us narrowly examine our own hearts, and consider from what motives, and with what feelings we are going to speak; and if there be not, as regards ourselves deep humility, as regards the sinner sincere love, and as regards Christ concern for His honour, we are not fit to restore another, but have need to be ourselves brought to a better mind. We must also make the subject a matter of prayer, and not proceed to offer correction till we have implored that wisdom which is from above, which is pure, peaceable and gentle. (See

James iii. 17.) In this manner we shall best bear one another's burdens; but if we are not willing so to act, we must remember that this very omission of duty will be a burden upon our own souls, the punishment of which we must bear, unless, by timely repentance, we turn to Christ, and through Him, find grace for the future, better to fulfil His law.

EXPLANATION.

Verse 6 to 10. In continuing to give practical rules of conduct, St. Paul says, (6) Let those who are being taught the blessed truths of the Gospel consider, that they are bound liberally to supply all the temporal wants of their teachers. (7) And do not deceive yourselves with false hopes; for God will not suffer those to go unpunished, who dare to mock Him with a pretended value for religion. According to a man's conduct now, will be his portion hereafter. (8) He whose chief object now is to indulge his fleshly nature, is laying up for himself nothing but corruption and misery. But he who is now living according to the guidance of the Holy Spirit, shall in the end attain unto everlasting life. (9) And let us not grow weary of doing what we ought, because we may have long to wait for our reward. For in God's appointed time we shall certainly reap a glorious harvest, if we steadfastly persevere unto the end. (10) Therefore according as we have the opportunity, let us be diligent to do all the good we can to every one, especially to fellow christians, to those who are brought into God's family by faith in Christ.

APPLICATION.

The duty of considering what seed we are so

It is a most serious and solemn thought are now sowing the seed of happiness, or endure for ever.

Much is it to be desired that every one inquire carefully what he is sowing, what it he will reap life or death. But some alas be persuaded to inquire; they wish to deceive themselves; they have their suspicions that this would not be satisfactory; and they would go on quietly till the worst comes, than disturbed by knowing their danger. Eternity be too short to utter all their regrets for so when regrets will be too late. Oh that men now consider, that God will not be mocked may for a time suffer Himself to be robbed of honour due to His name, and no punishment but it will not be always so. As surely as spring and winter, seed-time and harvest, follow each other so surely will a day of reckoning come at the appointed time, after this, our day of trial. Let it not become us to think of this, and be persuaded. Now if any one wishes to know really what he is sowing, he may certainly do so. Those of course are giving way to intemperance and vice, cannot tell what seed they are sowing; for even in this world they may perhaps reap the fruits thereof in the dis-

corruption of that very body they have sinfully indulged. But that we avoid open sin is not enough to decide the question; for that purpose we must inquire which is uppermost in the mind, as a subject of anxiety, the welfare of the soul, or things connected with our present ease and comfort.

There may be no guilty indulgence of fleshly lusts, and yet such an entire occupation of mind with temporal things, as effectually to exclude all spiritual mindedness. The seed we are sowing may seem to be very pure and good, because not in itself sinful; and yet if our hearts and affections are not raised above the things of time and sense, so as to be chiefly concerned about the prosperity of the soul and the glory of God, we are sowing to the flesh, and of it can but reap corruption. Again, we must ask another question: does our anxiety about our souls lead us to sacrifice every thing which may stand in the way of their prosperity? There are many people sufficiently aware of the importance of preparing for eternity, who yet are not willing to give up every thing in time for the sake of it. Conscience may be awake to give them trouble, and yet not be allowed to govern them. The consequence is, their anxiety about their souls is great enough, but it leads to nothing good. Like the rich man in the Gospel, they go away sorrowful, for though they cannot say to their souls, eat, drink, and be merry, yet they are not willing to sell all and follow Christ; they wish to enjoy this world without losing the next, but in this vain attempt to unite both, they secure neither. Though we may not be called upon to part

with every earthly good, for the sake of Christ, yet we must be ready to do so before we can be said to sow to the Spirit, or hope to reap life everlasting. Whether or no we are ready to make so great a sacrifice, we may learn from considering how we act in smaller matters. For instance, if the company we keep be found hurtful to our souls, can we give it up, or do we go on making false excuses to ourselves, and still indulge in the society which we feel to be injurious? Breaking off from the friendship of the world is a trying part, and often a turning point, in the history of all christians. Again, if a situation offers very favourable to our worldly interests, but where religion is likely to suffer, can we decline it, or do we resist the suggestions of conscience, under the plea that both ends may be secured? Can we risk the friendship of the great, at the call of duty, and reject the favour of the world, when our soul's good requires it? In fact, do we sacrifice our present interests, ease, and pleasure, whenever they seem likely to oppose in any degree our growth in grace, and to be injurious to our souls? Or, on the other hand, do we look about for arguments to stifle conscience, when it suggests any thing unpleasant? a way by which many who are convinced, but not converted, lose the enjoyment of this present world, and lay up for themselves a store of endless misery in the world to come.

Such self-inspection as this is most necessary for every one. And now, Reader, supposing that after a solemn inquiry into the state of your soul, you conclude that the case is well with you, and that you

are now sowing the seed from which you will reap life everlasting, ask yourself in what manner you have obeyed the Apostle's command, "Let him that is taught in the word communicate unto him that teacheth in all good things." Some little time ago it was the rich only who had the certain means of contributing to the temporal wants of the Ministers of the church established in this land; but it is not so now. And those who know the value of being taught in the word of God will feel it a great privilege to be permitted to contribute their donations, whether large or small, according to their ability, towards supporting spiritual teachers in places either destitute of, or scantily provided with them. The Pastoral Aid, and Curate Aid Societies, which have been lately formed, give the opportunity to all of communicating some of their worldly goods for the maintenance of Ministers, and thus enable them to obey the Apostle's injunction, which, though greatly overlooked, is still binding upon us. No rule of conduct plainly laid down in the Scriptures can safely be disregarded. It is required that we should all exert ourselves to the utmost in forwarding the cause of Christ, enlarging His kingdom, and spreading the knowledge of the truth, if it were possible, from pole to pole. There can be no real love to Christ, and therefore no real life in the soul, when there is not a desire thus to make Him known throughout the world. And surely to provide Ministers in our own land should be our first concern, and then to send them forth into other lands. The Propagation of the Gospel, and Church Missionary Societies are formed for this purpose. Surely those are not sowing

good seed who withhold their support from these societies, which afford us such a happy opportunity of obeying the Scriptural rule, and of testifying our love to souls, and our zeal for the honour of Him who died to save them. We may certainly judge how far the teaching of God's word has been profitable to ourselves by the exertion and self-denial which we are willing to make in order to have wherewith to give to further the teaching of that word at home and abroad. If we cannot deny ourselves some bodily gratification for the sake of advancing the spiritual interests of others, it is too plain we are not sowing to the Spirit, but to the flesh, and may therefore know what we shall reap. It should be observed, that the widow's mite, noticed by our Lord with so much approbation, was an offering towards the expenses of the Temple. She fully knew the value of religious worship, and gave her all to maintain it. And those who know the value of preaching and the blessedness of public worship, will certainly make great self-denying efforts to furnish desolate places with houses of prayer, and duly appointed Ministers to preach therein the glad tidings of the Gospel. Let those who are rich and abounding not in comforts only, but luxuries, consider how much is expected from them. We are told to do good unto all men, according as we have opportunity; and how great are the opportunities of the rich. They are constantly applied to for assistance to build more churches, and to maintain more Ministers; they have the opportunity, and they have the means of doing much; but alas, they often forget the Apostle's words, "*Be not weary in well doing;*" they often complain

of these repeated applications as troublesome, while they are never tired of indulging the repeated demands made by the appetites and inclinations of the flesh. Is not this bad husbandry? They are sowing seed which will yield them a sad return. Oh let us all, rich and poor, keep in mind the judgment day, and spend our money, our time, our influence in such manner, as we can confidently believe will then be found most profitable. Yes; this is seed-time, this is the time to put out our talents to usury. Let us then not be weary in well doing, but as we have opportunity let us do good unto all men, especially to the household of faith, remembering that in due season we shall reap, if we faint not.

EXPLANATION.

Verse 11 to 18. St. Paul's letters were not generally with his own hand, but he employed another to write what he dictated. It is supposed by some that the thorn in the flesh which he speaks of, was a disease in his eyes which rendered writing painful. As a mark therefore of his affection, he calls the attention of the Galatians to this circumstance. (11) See how I have written this long letter to you with my own hand. (12) And believe me, those are not your true friends who wish you to be circumcised. They do it out of vain glory, and in order to escape the persecution which might come upon them from the Jews, if they preached faithfully the doctrine of the cross of Christ. (13) For they themselves who are circumcised, do not keep the law of Moses, which

they pretend so much to honour, and they only wish you to be circumcised in order that they may glory in having you of their party. (14) But as for me, God forbid that I should find subject of glorying in any thing, but the atonement made for us by our Lord Jesus Christ upon the cross, through faith in whom the world is dead to me, and I am dead to the world. (15) For to those who believe in Christ Jesus neither circumcision nor uncircumcision is of any consequence, but the being made altogether a new creature. (16) To as many then as receive these doctrines, namely of salvation by grace, and the necessity of an entire spiritual change, to them be peace and mercy. They are God's true Israel. (17) From henceforth let no man trouble me with raising doubts as to what doctrine I preach; for the wounds I have received in my body are proofs enough of my faithfulness in preaching the doctrine of the cross of Christ. (18) And now, brethren, may the favour of our Lord Jesus Christ refresh and comfort your spirits. Amen.

APPLICATION.

No religion will save the soul, that does not produce
a change of heart.

There is a sort of religion which meets not only with no opposition, but which is even very popular in the world: it is that which makes a fair show in *the flesh*. The outward observances of religion will

often be approved of and practised, even by the most worldly and the most wicked. But it is the spiritual transforming doctrines of the Cross which meet with resistance. The conflict rests altogether between Satan and Christ. The enemy of our souls will resist nothing but simply those truths on which salvation depends. We may fancy that, as the King of Syria once said to his captains, "Fight neither with small nor great, save only with the King of Israel;" (See 1 Kings, xxii. 31.) so the devil says to his agents, "Fight neither with small nor great, save only with the Lord's Christ." Such at any rate is the fact, that he will quietly suffer us to go any length in religion short of that, by which alone we can be saved; and the more he can flatter us with the idea that we are religious, while living without a practical faith in Christ, the better he is pleased. Hence it arises that there are so many perfectly satisfied with themselves, and indulging the most confident hope of going to heaven when they die, who yet have no idea what is meant by being crucified to the world, and the world to them. They have experienced nothing of that entire change of mind and feeling which follows upon a saving faith in the cross of Christ; therefore they cannot adopt the Apostle's language, nor even rightly understand what it means. But it would be well for us to stop, and seriously consider the solemn declaration contained in the fifteenth verse. Circumcision here stands for all outward religion, and it is pronounced to be utterly unavailing: it will in itself profit nothing. What is required is that we should become altogether new creatures. If then there be in us no sign of this

the presence of God, and the pure joys of where is the proof that we are changed? crucified to the world, and the world to mean, that we are as little under its hurtful influence as though we were dead, or it were dead. it so with us? Is this our case? Are we in nothing but the Cross? Is it our chief only real happiness to know that we are the property of the Lord, and to be able to say, "My body is His, and I am His?" (Solo. Song ii. 16.)

Such were the feelings of St. Paul; such be ours. And if we do thus glory in Christ, in Him and His salvation our chief delight, we the Israel of God, and grace, mercy, and peace will rest upon us for ever, through the same our Lord Jesus Christ, to whom be honour, and praise and glory, for evermore.

PRAYER.

away, and myself fall under the power of temptation. Make me ready to share in the sorrows of my fellow creatures, and anxious also to relieve them. Thus may I constantly be found endeavouring to fulfil the law of Christ. Lord, preserve me from thinking myself to be something, when I am nothing. Oh teach me to know my own worthlessness, and to look upon myself as I really am in Thy sight. Let me not be willingly deceived. Help me to prove my own work, to examine my heart and life, and to seek to have cause for rejoicing in myself, not in the opinion of others, knowing that the burden of sin must lie at my own door; that none can bear it for me but Christ only. Make me truly thankful for religious instruction, and willing, according to my ability, to return temporal for spiritual blessings. Oh grant that I may never so deceive myself as to dare to mock Thee with the mere show of religion. Impress upon my mind this awful truth, that as I sow now, I shall reap to all eternity. Suffer me not to sow to the flesh. Oh preserve me from the unlawful indulgence of natural appetites, and grant that I may not only resist temptation to open sin, but that I may moreover live a life of holy devotedness to Thee; that I may sow to the Spirit, and of the Spirit reap life everlasting. O God, suffer me not to grow weary in well doing. Comfort my heart with faith in Thy promise, that in due season I shall reap, if I faint not. As I have opportunity teach me to do good unto all men, especially to those who are of the household of faith. Preserve me from the evil counsels of those, who would desire only that I should make a fair show in the flesh. Grant that I

may glory in nothing save in the cross of our Jesus Christ. Grant that through the power of in Christ the world may be crucified unto me I unto the world. Oh grant that through I may become altogether a new creature, and that mercy and peace, which rests for ever upon those who are Thine own faithful people. May the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with my now and for evermore. Amen.



1. The first part of the document is a list of names and addresses of the members of the committee. The names are listed in alphabetical order, and the addresses are given below each name. The list is as follows:

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